

Pharmaceutical Marketing in Developing Countries: A Study of Physicians' Drug Prescription Behavior in Iran

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Abstract

Although the knowledge of prescribing behavior of physicians is a prerequisite for successful marketing of pharmaceutical products, as yet a systematic scientific study showing the pattern of doctors' prescription behavior and the factors influencing them is remained unsearched in Iran. Therefore, this study is aimed to explore the pattern of prescription behavior and major factors influencing physicians' drug prescription behavior in Iran with focus on GPs and cardiologists (specialists).

The study suggests a conceptual and analytical model for understanding prescription decision process consisting of four components: Diagnosis, Influences, (drug) Selection and Prescription (DISP Model). Based upon the model a questionnaire was developed, and tested in Iran. The data was collected from 400 randomly selected physicians including 300 GPs and 100 cardiologists (specialists), and SPSS was used for data analysis.

The results show that six factors including: proven clinical effectiveness (evidence based), Key Opinion Leader (KOLs) recommendation and experiences, cost to the patient, drug delivery mode (oral, injection, etc.), patient preferences (specific company's drug) and medical representative (med-rep) promotional activities had statistically significant impacts on the prescribing behavior of the physicians. However, the results show that

GPs weighted proven clinical effectiveness (evidence base) and information from med- reprs (promotion material) as most important, while cardiologists weighted all six factors as important. Furthermore, the physicians were different in generic and branded drugs. The cardiologists preferred well-known brands while GPs did not differentiate the generic and branded ones. Finally significant managerial (marketing) and academic implications are suggested.

Keywords: Pharmaceutical marketing, core customers, Drug prescription behavior, prescription decision model, influencing factors.