Medical specialist’s knowledge, perceptions and views about generic medicines in Malaysia: Findings from a qualitative study and the implication

**Background & Objective:** Medical specialists have an essential role in promotion of generic medicines. However, misconceptions and negative perceptions about generic medicines among them could be a barrier to utilization of generic medicines. Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore their knowledge, perceptions and views about generic medicines.

**Methods:** A qualitative methodology was adopted in this study. A qualitative descriptive study with phenomenology overtones was the research strategy. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of medical specialists until saturation of data was achieved. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Then, the subsequent transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. The themes were generated using both deductive (theoretical) and inductive coding. To ensure reliability of data analysis, peer review and independent analysis of the data were done.

**Results:** Five (5) major themes were identified:
1. Factors affecting specialist’s prescribing practice with regard to generic medicines and original brand medicines
2. Specialist’s perceptions of efficacy, safety and quality of generic medicines
3. Specialist’s knowledge and confidence with Malaysian generic regulatory approval system
4. Drug information sources used by the specialist’s
5. International non-proprietary name prescribing.

**Conclusion:** The study findings showed that several factors influenced prescribing decision with regard to the brands of the medicines including familiarity and experience with generic medicines, clinical condition of the patient, availability of the medicine brand in the hospital and department financial allocations. Moreover, misconceptions about quality, safety, efficacy and bioequivalence of generic medicines were prevalent among some participants. Furthermore, many participants were not familiar with the Malaysian generic medicines approval system. Therefore medical specialists concerns need to be addressed. Some recommendations and suggestions were made to improve generic medicines utilization in the country.

Alian A Alrasheedy
Qassim University, KSA

Allan-a@hotmail.com