Introduction:

OTC medications are available in pharmacies for patients without a physician prescription. These medications improve common symptoms, such as acute pain, allergy, cough, cold, headache, sleep problems, and digestive disorders. OTC consumers have almost no information about their adverse effects, warnings, and interactions; this issue boosts the risks of misuse, especially in the elderly population. Recent research has shown that more than 50% of the elderly do not appropriately use OTC medications. Therefore, proper and accurate information regarding their side effects can improve health. Most OTC medications are taken at extra therapeutic doses and require a pharmacist guide for dose adjustment. Considering the increase in the consumption rate and the undeniable role of pharmacists in managing OTC medication issues, we evaluated the knowledge, practice, and attitudes of community pharmacists in the OTC therapy field and identified obstacles and problems. We have provided constructive suggestions for improving existing conditions.

Method:

We collected data by presenting a comprehensive questionnaire to pharmacists. The questionnaire was designed for three domains regarding consultation with OTC medications: knowledge, practice, and attitude. After evaluating the CVI and CVR of questionnaire, volunteer community pharmacists completed it. Attitude questions have five options based on Likert scale: " I completely agree ", "I agree," "I have no opinion," "I disagree," and "I completely disagree." The knowledge questions were multiple-choice, and the performance questions were three clinical cases in different situations. The score for each domain for each pharmacist was divided by the total score of that domain and multiplied by 100 to obtain the percentage of knowledge, practice, and attitude of the person in that domain. Possible relationships between every domain score and other data such as age, sex, university graduation, employment duration, and number of visits of patients to receive OTC medicine per day will be estimated.

Results:

The results of this study in the three domains of attitude, knowledge, and practice evaluation showed that in the knowledge evaluation, the highest score that a pharmacist could obtain was 7, the lowest score was -1, and the average was 3.62, which is weak. In the attitude domain, the average was 3.49 (highest score:5), and the attitude of pharmacists was evaluated as medium to high. In the practice section, with the lowest score of 0, the highest score of 3, and an average of 1, pharmacists' performance in facing clinical cases was weak.

Discussion & Conclusion:

Pharmacists are qualified to prescribe OTC drugs to serve the public interest according to the teaching of clinical pharmacy courses at the university. As a result, they can play a very important role in helping patients choose an OTC drug. The pharmacist's ability to inform patients about side effects, interactions, and how to take medications requires that the pharmacist's information about diseases and OTC drugs be up-to-date. So Periodic examinations of OTC therapy should be held every few years for all graduate pharmacists and an incentive point should be considered for those who obtain an acceptable score. Although Changes in the structure for the financial circulation of pharmacies must be made. So that the stability of the pharmacies does not depend on the sale of drugs. This issue causes that pharmacies do not need to sell more for financial stability, which will control the excessive use of drugs and provide more pharmaceutical services.

Keywords: Knowledge, Pharmaceutical Advice, OTC Drugs