

Study investigates health literacy and appropriate use of over-the-counter drugs

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Self-medication refers to the use of over-the-counter (OTC) medication and other means of dealing with individual health problems. Self-medication is promoted as a policy measure for reducing unnecessary visits to medical facilities for minor symptoms and curtailing medical costs.

However, OTC drugs are also associated with various risks, such as adverse events due to misuse or abuse of such drugs and incompatibility with [prescription drugs](#).

Health literacy (an indicator measuring health knowledge) refers to an ability that contributes to the appropriate use of medicine. However, few studies have assessed the relationship between [health literacy](#) and comprehension of OTC drug package inserts.

Therefore, the researchers conducted a questionnaire survey targeting adults who purchase OTC drugs at pharmacies to evaluate their understanding of package inserts and their coping behaviors in case of adverse reactions to the drugs. The findings are published in the *Journal of Pharmaceutical Policy and Practice*.

The relationship of these two variables with health literacy was analyzed. The results showed that high health literacy among OTC drug consumers was associated with both a high level of comprehension of package inserts and appropriate behavior when dealing with [adverse drug reactions](#).

The study showed that among adults who purchase OTC drugs, those with higher health literacy were more likely to understand package inserts and consult a health care provider when adverse drug reactions occur. This indicates the important role of pharmacists and registered sellers in distributing appropriate information and raising health literacy to ensure proper [self-medication](#).

More information: Shoichi Masumoto et al, Association between health literacy and medication comprehension; attitudes toward reporting adverse events in adults using over-the-counter medicines, *Journal of Pharmaceutical Policy and Practice* (2023). [DOI: 10.1186/s40545-023-00596-3](#)

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