

Consumer Views on General Pharmacy Patronage and Pharmacist Consultation Services at Ubon Rajathanee University Drug Store

มุมมองของผู้มารับบริการต่อองค์ประกอบทั่วไปเกี่ยวกับบริการด้านยาและบริการให้คำปรึกษาเรื่องยาโดยเภสัชกร ณ สถานปฏิบัติการเภสัชกรรมชุมชน

มหาวิทยาลัยอุบลราชธานี (ร้านยา ม.อุบล)

Burin T. Sriwong

Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science, Silpakorn University Nakorn Pathom

บุรินทร์ ต. ศรีวงษ์

คณะเภสัชศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร นครปฐม

Abstract

The objectives of this study were to determine consumer views of general pharmacy patronages and pharmacist consultation services offered by the Ubon Rajathanee University Drug Store (UUDS). This study is exploratory research. The research design applied for this study was cross-sectional via a self-administered questionnaire completed by customers who purchase medication at UUDS. A convenience sample of 100 customers using UUDS was selected. For an in-store survey, subjects were asked about their views of the 13 general pharmacy patronages and six pharmacist consultation services using a uni-polar importance scale (with the scale ranging from 1=not important to 5=most important). They also were asked questions about drug purchases and demographic information. The mean importance scores of all the 13 general pharmacy patronages and all the six pharmacist consultation services were rated above three (of moderate importance) and above four (of considerable importance) consecutively.

This study has shown that all the 13 general pharmacy patronages were considered important and needed to be provided as a basic step to build-in rapport relationship and maintain its customers. However, fulfillment of the general pharmacy patronages alone cannot assure the success of UUDS. In order to maintain customer loyalty, the service aspect can not be ignored. Pharmacist consultation services are a crucial part of the success of the pharmacy business and make UUDS an ideal setting that customers are looking for. The findings also suggest including the important pharmacist products and services in the community pharmacy standard guideline, since customers in this study perceived them to be of at least considerable importance. Also, some of these dimensions were not included in the current community standard guideline yet. So, in order to make the community pharmacy standard guideline more effective and more efficient, customers' views on these general pharmacy patronages and pharmacist consultation services should not be ignored.

Keywords *Pharmacy patronage, Pharmacist Service, Community Pharmacy Laboratory*

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของการศึกษานี้เพื่อศึกษามุมมองของผู้มารับบริการต่อองค์ประกอบทั่วไปเกี่ยวกับบริการด้านยาและบริการให้คำปรึกษาเรื่องยาโดยเภสัชกร ณ สถานปฏิบัติภารกิจสาธารณสุขชุมชน มหาวิทยาลัยอุบลราชธานี (ร้านยา ม.อุบล) ในช่วงเวลาทำการ การศึกษานี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงสำรวจแบบภาคตัดขวาง ดำเนินการเก็บข้อมูลโดยผู้วิจัยได้ขอความร่วมมือจากลูกค้า 100 คน ในการตอบแบบสอบถามก่อนที่ลูกค้าจะออกจากร้าน แบบสอบถามประกอบด้วยองค์ประกอบทั่วไปเกี่ยวกับบริการด้านยา 13 ด้าน บริการให้คำปรึกษาเรื่องยาโดยเภสัชกร 6 กิจกรรม และ ข้อมูลทั่วไปเกี่ยวกับ ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม ทั้งนี้สเกลที่ใช้วัดความคิดเห็น เป็นสเกลวัดระดับความสำคัญโดยแบ่งออกเป็น 5 ระดับ (เริ่มจากระดับที่ 1 = ไม่มีความสำคัญ ไปถึง ระดับที่ 5 = สำคัญมากที่สุด)

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ลูกค้าให้คะแนนความสำคัญต่อองค์ประกอบทั่วไปเกี่ยวกับบริการด้านยา ทั้ง 13 ด้านในระดับ “สำคัญปานกลาง” ขึ้นไป ในขณะที่ บริการให้คำปรึกษาเรื่องยาโดยเภสัชกรทั้ง 6 กิจกรรมได้คะแนนในระดับ “สำคัญมาก” ขึ้นไป ผลลัพธ์ที่ได้จากการวิจัยครั้งนี้ พบว่า ลูกค้าที่มาใช้บริการ ณ สถานปฏิบัติภารกิจสาธารณสุขชุมชน มหาวิทยาลัยอุบลราชธานี ให้ความสำคัญต่อองค์ประกอบทั่วไปเกี่ยวกับบริการด้านยา ซึ่งถือได้ว่าองค์ประกอบทั้ง 13 ด้านนี้เป็นปัจจัยพื้นฐานที่สถานปฏิบัติภารกิจสาธารณสุขชุมชน มหาวิทยาลัยอุบลราชธานีจะต้องมีไว้ให้บริการลูกค้า เพื่อที่จะจูงใจให้ลูกค้าเข้ามาใช้บริการ

แต่อย่างไรก็ตาม องค์ประกอบทั้ง 13 ด้าน ไม่อาจจะเป็นหลักประกันได้ว่าลูกค้าจะกลับมาใช้บริการในอนาคตอีกหรือไม่ ในการที่จะรักษาลูกค้าประจำไว้ บริการให้คำปรึกษาเรื่องยาโดยเภสัชกรจะเป็นกุญแจสำคัญที่จะทำให้สถานปฏิบัติภารกิจสาธารณสุขชุมชน มหาวิทยาลัยอุบลราชธานีประสบความสำเร็จตามวัตถุประสงค์ที่ตั้งไว้ และยังสามารถสร้างภาพลักษณ์ของการเป็น “ร้านยาในอุดมคติ” ของประชาชนอีกด้วย นอกจากนี้แล้ว ผลการศึกษาที่ได้จากงานวิจัยนี้จะเป็นข้อมูลที่เป็นประโยชน์อย่างยิ่งในการพิจารณาเพิ่มองค์ประกอบที่ยังไม่มีในเกณฑ์มาตรฐานร้านยาที่ทางสภาเภสัชกรรมได้จัดทำขึ้น ทั้งนี้เพราะ ผู้มารับบริการได้พิจารณาแล้วว่าองค์ประกอบเหล่านี้ล้วนมีความสำคัญต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกใช้บริการ

คำสำคัญ องค์ประกอบทั่วไปเกี่ยวกับด้านยา บริการเภสัชกรรม สถานปฏิบัติภารกิจสาธารณสุขชุมชน มหาวิทยาลัยอุบลราชธานี

Introduction

The health care market, including pharmacy, continues to change, and consumers' views on general pharmacy patronage and pharmacist consultation services are playing a dominant role in this change (Metge et al., 1998). Accurate information on the needs and preferences of consumers is critical if pharmacy and pharmacist are to expand their service roles in the evolving health care system (Cerulli, 2002). Understanding what motivates consumers to select a specific pharmacy is of paramount importance in attracting new customers and retaining old ones (Roughhead et al., 2003). Defining the types of general pharmacy patronage attributes that are most important to consumers allows the pharmacy retailer to systematically maintain and improve customer-satisfaction levels (Larson et al., 2002). This type of data is also useful for developing initiatives aimed at attracting customers away from the competition.

The Ubon Rajathanee University Drug Store (UUDS) is built to be an ideal community pharmacy model for serving a community in drug counseling, rational drug use, and providing quality pharmaceuticals at a reasonable price. As the UUDS continues to improve its service quality in order to be the standard model for other community pharmacies to follow and bring the best benefit to its customers, a conscious effort must be made to evaluate general pharmacy patronage and pharmacist consultation services provided at the UUDS and correct any deficiencies. The objectives of this study were to 1) determine consumers' views on general pharmacy patronage for The UUDS, and 2) to determine consumers' views on pharmacist services offered by the UUDS.

Materials and Methods

A scale to measure consumers' views on pharmacy patronage and pharmacist consultation services was designed and evaluated according to the cross-sectional, longitudinal reviews, and the procedure for developing measures of marketing constructs proposed by Churchill (1979).

General pharmacy patronage was defined as the integral components of evaluative criteria used by consumers in determining pharmacy patronage for purchasing medications (Smith and Coons, 1990). A set of thirteen relevant dimensions was examined. Also, for this study, pharmacist consultation service was defined as a service that provided directly by pharmacists who are responsible for the provision of drug therapy, toward a specific consumer's need in order to achieve definite outcomes that improve a consumer's quality of life (T. Sriwong, 1999).

Subjects were asked how important are the thirteen general pharmacy patronage to them in using the UUDS for obtaining medications. Then the subjects were also asked to rank the three most important reasons from the above dimensions. Subjects were also asked how important the six pharmacist consultation service activities were to them and also had they ever experience that specific pharmacist consultation services when visiting the UUDS for

purchasing their medications.

Pharmacy administration faculty members and graduate students reviewed the first draft of the questionnaire for face validity, clarity, format and overall evaluation of the instrument. Then the questionnaire was copied into A4 paper with draft cover letter, and additional written comment about the questionnaire, and distributed to the selected 50 samples for pretesting the questionnaire. Only small changes in direction, and one attribute were made due to some respondents being confused on how to answer the question, also to use the more applicable attribute. Subsequently, for data collection, a convenient random sample of 100 customers, age 19 years old or over, who visited the UUDS between 1st October and 7th October 2001 were asked to participate in the store survey, using a self-administered questionnaire, distributed by the UUDS pharmacists. The responses were coded for computer analysis. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences PC 9.0 for Windows was used for conducting all statistical tests.

Results

Respondent Demographics and Patronage Characteristics

Demographics of the respondents are shown in Table I. The median age of respondents was 30 years, and 60% were females. About 58% of respondents rated their health as good to very good. Over 46% earned at least bachelor's degree/equivalent or higher education. Seventy three percent of respondents thought they had enough to more than enough income to spend.

Almost 84 % indicated they had ever obtained at least one prescription for themselves from the UUDS, and 54.9 % did not have any type of health insurance or other health benefit program that cover their health care costs. About 45 % of respondents indicated that they did not know pharmacist at all. While 58.2% went to demonstration pharmacy for drug consultation and purchasing prescription medications, the other 41.8% went there for self-care products and refilled medications. The average number of visit in the past three months was 2.74 times.

Table I Respondent Demographics and Patronage Characteristics

Characteristic	Number of Respondents (%)
SELF (Have you ever obtained a prescription medication at a pharmacy for yourself?)	
Yes	82(83.7)
No	16(16.3)
Total	98(100.0)

HEALTH INSURANCE (Do you have any type of health insurance or other health benefit program that cover your health care cost?)

Yes	41(45.1)
No	50(54.9)
Total	91(100.0)

KNOWPHARMACIST (How well do you know the pharmacist(s) at this pharmacy?)

Very well	11(12.1)
Well	19(20.9)
Somewhat	20(22.0)
Not at all	41(45.1)
Total	91(100.0)

CONSULT/REFILL/SELF-CARE (What is the reason for this visit to the pharmacy?)

Consult	53(58.2)
Refill/self-care	38(41.8)
Total	91(100.0)

VISIT (How many prescription medications both new and refill have you obtained in the past three months?)

0	14(15.7)
1-2	42(47.2)
3-5	25(28.1)
More than 5 times	8(9.0)
Total	89(100.0)

GENDER

Male	40(40.0)
Female	60(60.0)
Total	100(100.0)

AGE

19 – 29	48(49.5)
30 – 39	18(18.5)
40 – 49	23(23.8)
50 – 59	5(5.1)
60 and over	3(3.1)
Total	97(100.0)

Characteristic **Number of Respondents (%)**

HEALTH STATUS

Poor	4(4.0)
Fair	38(38.4)
Good	47(47.5)
Very Good	10(10.1)
Total	99(100.0)

EDUCATION

Elementary School	15(15.2)
High School or equal	38(38.4)
Bachelor's Degree or higher	46(46.0)
Total	99(100.0)

INCOME

Less than enough	27(27.3)
Enough	57(57.6)
More than enough	15(15.2)
Total	99(100.0)

Note Totals do not add up to 100 due to missing data.

Section I General Pharmacy Patronage Dimensions

An overview of the responses to the survey is provided in Table II. The range of responses, the mean rating and standard deviation for each item are given. The mean item responses were on the great importance end of the importance rating scale. All thirteen mean item responses were greater than three (considerably important). The mean response score was considerable importance. The standard deviation of the mean item responses ranged from 0.65 to 1.23. Eight mean item responses had standard deviations less than one.

Instances of unusable or missing responses randomly were dispersed throughout the scale portion of the questionnaire (See Table II). A total of four item responses were affected, involving four of the 100 respondents. The maximum number of missing responses for any item was one, or not greater than 1% of the total number of responses.

Also, respondents were asked to rank the importance of those general pharmacy patronage factors that they considered important. The frequencies of factors rated most important, second most important, and third most important are summarized in Table III.

The total importance scores and rank by total importance score for each factor are shown in Table III. "Pharmacist professional services such as consultation" was selected as the most important factor. "Presence of pharmacist during office hours" was ranked second, followed by "Pharmacist (competent, knowledgeable)."

Table II Descriptive Statistics of General Pharmacy Patronage Dimensions

Item Range	No ^a .	Mean ^b		Std. Dev.
		Response	Dev.	
1. Always has my prescription medication in stock.	99	4.01	0.87	1 - 5
2. Private area to speak with pharmacist about my prescriptions.	99	3.91	1.05	1 - 5
3. Convenient location.	99	3.99	0.99	1 - 5
4. Store appearance. (layout, decor, well lit, clean)	100	3.96	0.91	1 - 5
5. Prompt and attentive service.	100	4.31	0.77	2 - 5
6. Home delivery and emergency services.	100	3.34	1.23	1 - 5
7. Pharmacist professional services such as consultation.	100	4.63	0.65	2 - 5
8. Merchandise selection for other health care products.	99	3.62	1.03	1 - 5
9. Presence of the pharmacist during office hours.	100	4.54	0.72	2 - 5
10. Prices of prescription medications.	100	3.95	1.04	1 - 5
11. Pharmacist. (competent, knowledgeable)	100	4.53	0.70	2 - 5
12. Hours open.	100	3.89	1.09	1 - 5
13. Pharmacy technical staff.	100	4.42	0.73	2 - 5

Note:

a. Totals do not add up to 100 due to missing data.

b. Includes insertion of aggregate mean score for missing data.

Table III Respondents Ranking Specific Pharmacy Patronage Dimensions as First, Second, and Third Most Important.

Dimension	Ranking					
	Most Important	Second Important	Third Important	Total Important Score	By Total Score	By Mean Score
7. Pharmacist professional services such as consultation. ^d	40	19	15	173	1	2
9. Presence of pharmacist during office hours.	17	25	8	109	2	3
11. Pharmacist. (competent, knowledgeable)	7	14	26	75	3	1
5. Prompt and attentive service. ^d	10	8	11	57	4	4
3. Convenient location. ^d	7	9	2	41	5	6
13. Pharmacy technical staff.	3	10	7	36	6	5
10. Prices of prescription medications.	3	6	7	28	7	7
1. Always has my prescription medication in stock.	6	2	6	28	7	8
4. Store appearance. (layout, decor, well lit, clean) ^d	4	2	5	21	9	10
2. Private area to speak with pharmacist about my prescriptions. ^d	2	3	5	15	10	11
12. Hours open.	0	0	4	4	11	9
8. Merchandise selection for other health care products. ^d	0	0	2	2	12	12
6. Home delivery and emergency services.	0	1	0	2	12	13

Note: 1. Total weighed importance score were calculated by multiplying:

Most Important by 3

Second Most Important by 2

Third Most Important by 1

Section II Pharmacist Consultation Services

An overview of the responses to the survey is provided in Table IV. The range of responses, the mean rating and standard deviation for each item are given. All of the mean item responses were on the great importance end of the scale. All of the six (100.00 %) mean item responses were greater than four (very important). The lowest mean score was 4.26, which was item 6: "Checks my understanding of prescription dosage directions." The mean response was considerable importance. The standard deviation of the mean item responses ranged from 0.76 to 0.80. All six mean item responses had standard deviations less than one.

Table IV Descriptive Statistic for Pharmacist Consultation Services

Activities	No ^a Response	Mean ^b Dev.	Std.	Range	% Exp
1. Tells me what the prescription medicine is and what it is used for.	100	4.38	0.79	3 – 5	84.8
2. Tells me when and how to take my prescription medicine.	99	4.33	0.77	3 – 5	68.7
3. Tells me about side effects or precautions about my prescription.	100	4.46	0.76	3 – 5	71.7
4. Tells me of any dangers in taking prescription medicines together.	100	4.43	0.79	3 – 5	51.5
5. Puts extra labels on the container telling me about my prescription.	100	4.49	0.80	2 – 5	80.8
6. Checks my understanding of prescription dosage directions.	100	4.26	0.80	3 – 5	63.6

Note:

- a. Totals do not add up to 100 due to missing data.
- b. Include insertion of aggregate mean score for missing data.
- c. % Exp stands for Percent Experience

Conclusion and Suggestions

From the resident demographic profile, the majority of customers (60%) were female with quite high education level and thought that they had enough income to spend. These customers came to the UUDS with two main reasons. First, they wanted counseling (58.2%), and second, they came for self-service and refill medication (41.8%). Specific strategies are needed to maintain these customers' loyalty such as, implementation of dermatology clinic, patient profile, membership advantage, women and health information, and increased the product lines in self-service area, etc. Interestingly, about 45% of the customers thought that they did not know pharmacist at all. It might be the difficult to build on relationship in the long term and to create patient-focus approach. One solution is to start up a patient profile service, membership implementation program and a

pharmaceutical care service. At the same time, pharmacists must be trained in effective communication skills.

The results show that all general pharmacy patronage dimensions were rated above three (considerable important). This implies that customers expected these general patronage dimensions. In other words, it is the basic requirement that the UUDS has to provide. It is the responsibility for the pharmacy manager to fulfill their needs. It is very interesting that the top three dimensions based on the mean importance criteria, “Pharmacist professional services such as consultation”, “Presence of pharmacist during office hours”, and “Pharmacist (competent, knowledgeable)” were all related to pharmacist component. It is reassured that customers placed their trust on the pharmacist in the decision making about their health. So, pharmacist must be reliable, competent, and always be there in response to their needs. The results suggest that pharmacist plays a major role in building relationship with customers and their Loyalty to the UUDS is ultimately based on pharmacist communication skills.

All the six pharmacist consultation services were rated above four (very important) by customers. It means that they considered them very crucial and expected it to be provided by pharmacist. However, looking more closely in the percent experience, customers received these services in different levels. There is room for improvement: the UUDS could increase awareness of customers or show them that UUDS pharmacist tries to provide the service that customers feel is less adequately provided at present. For example “Tell me any dangers in taking prescription medication together”, only 51.5% of customers thought that they ever experienced this service from the UUDS.

This study showed that all the general pharmacy patronage were considered important and needed to be provided as a basic step to build-in traffic and maintain its customers. However, fulfillment of the general pharmacy patronage alone cannot guarantee the success of the UUDS. In order to maintain customers’ Loyalty, pharmacist consultation services cannot be ignored. Pharmacist consultation services would be the crucial part of success and make the UUDS an ideal setting that customers are waiting for.

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