

Quality Use of Quality Medicines

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The use of medicines as healthcare interventions bring to the fore 2 important aspects of quality namely; 'quality of medicines' and 'quality use of medicines' (QUM). Governmental and non-governmental agencies in a regulatory and advisory role monitor medicines for quality production, distribution and proper use. Reports about substandard quality medicines suggest a need for further improvements in quality production and distribution of medicines.^[1] QUM is not strictly monitored as is the quality assurance carried out in the production of medicines. The importance of 'QUM' has entered the scene rather late as compared to 'quality of medicines'. Consumers owe themselves the responsibility in using their medicines appropriately. However it is the healthcare professional, who plays a pivotal role in assisting consumers in QUM. Wise collaborative decisions of prescribers, nurses, pharmacists, and consumers contribute greatly to QUM.^[2] In this editorial, we discuss the aspects of quality and the use of quality medicines as a collective responsibility of pharmaceutical industries, healthcare professionals, and consumers with the support of other stakeholders in healthcare.

Efforts to ensure quality in medicine production are based on good manufacturing practices. Steps are taken to assure quality in production, packing, distribution, and storage of medicines. Regulatory agencies set standards for the purity, stability, impurities, etc. as mentioned in pharmacopoeias. Regulatory agencies also expand their laws, guidelines, and code of ethics to QUM. National and international non-governmental healthcare agencies mostly prepare clinical guidelines, medicine formularies, and ethical standards and conduct campaigns for quality use of medicines. There should be no significant change in quality of the product when it is consumed compared to when it was produced.

In addition to the medicine being safe and effective, it also needs to be affordable and convenient for the consumers. The organoleptic properties of the medicines should be appealing to the consumers.

Quality use of quality medicines enforces consumer trust. Consumers' trust in medicines and the healthcare providers increases their adherence to therapy. Healthcare outcomes are not just the result of medicines alone. Medical care, nursing care, pharmaceutical care and the care taken by the consumers themselves have important roles on healthcare outcomes. Depending on the need healthcare professionals should be assertive, empathetic, and informative to the consumers. Assessment skills of the providers help the consumers understand the diagnosis and prognosis of their health problems. When patients are not competent enough to take care of themselves, advocacy of professionals play a crucial role in speaking on their behalf.^[3] Professional care interventions are expanded to assess consumer behavior and bring about modifications if and when required. Consumer rights should be considered before delivering an intervention. Proper decisions on QUM can improve the productivity and functionality of the consumers whenever applicable. A healthy and productive person is indeed an asset to the society.

In summary, the 'quality of medicines' and 'quality use of medicines' are essential parts of quality assurance in healthcare. Quality uses of quality medicines are a collective responsibility of all stakeholders in healthcare to ensure expected healthcare outcomes.

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