



# CARIBBEAN POISON INFORMATION NETWORK



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## IMPLICATIONS OF SELF MEDICATION

Dr. Sonia Davidson

General Practitioner, Public Health Specialist and Wellness Consultant

# A Domain of Self-Care



Self-medication is one domain of self-care



# Self-care



- Self Care is a part of the earliest history of mankind
- Is defined as non-formally organised health activities and health-related decision-making encompassing self-medication, self-treatment and first aid in the normal social context of peoples " everyday lives"





# Seeking Independence Through Self-Care

basic goals:

- To improve the quality of life of individuals by enabling them to maintain health and maximise their potential in health
- To enable individuals to cope with chronic diseases and deal with minor problems
- To guide individuals in optimising the use of health care facilities



# Definition-1

Self Medication is a specific range of medicinal products which are freely available and for which a doctor's prescription is not required.



## Definition-2

Self-medication is the use by lay persons of non-prescription medicines for symptoms and minor ailments, with those persons bearing the full responsibility for his or her own treatment



# Self-medication

The selection and use of medicines by individuals to treat self-recognisable illnesses and symptoms



## Definition used by the World Self-Medication Industry (WSMI)

The treatment of common health problems with medicines especially designed and labelled for use without medical supervision and approved as safe and effective for such use

(A person may also self-medicate by taking more or less than the prescribed or recommended dose of a drug)



# World Self medication Industry

- A world umbrella organisation of national associations of non-prescription drug manufacturers and distributors
- Mandate: " To further the understanding and responsible use of self-medication products by consumers as safe and effective treatment of conditions that are suitable for self care
- Has had 'official relations' with the WHO since 1977 and interfaces with WMA, FIP and ICN



# Options of Self Medication

1. Substances previously developed to treat medical conditions on prescription only
2. Substances developed for non-prescription treatment of medical conditions
3. Substances which are part of the informal or traditional folk medicinal culture
4. Substances which are or have become part of the recreational culture



# Origins of Self Medication

- Self medication with over the counter medicines has long been a feature of the lay health system and were originally parts of plants

- A century ago, most of the few effective drugs were plant based.

*Examples:* **aspirin** (from willow bark), **digoxin** (from foxglove), **quinine** (from cinchona bark), and morphine (from the opium poppy).



# Trend in Self Medication

Self medication with OTC's has increased correspondingly with the growth of the pharmaceutical industry

# Current Status of OTCs



- OTC drug sales account for between 8% and 30% of total pharmaceutical sales in the majority of world regions.

U.S.        7.7%        in 2007

U.K.        15.8%        in 2007.



- Higher percentages of OTC sales are often found in regions that are less developed, such as India or China



# Over the counter drugs

In the U.S.A. more than 600 products are now available over the counter (not requiring a Doctors prescription)

The corresponding Figure for Jamaica is not readily available

# Self Reliance?



Nearly 80 percent of Americans report using an over-the-counter medication in the preceding year to treat at least one of the ailments from which they suffer – almost twice the number that either consulted a physician or took a prescription medication.

Survey conducted on behalf of the Consumer Healthcare Products Association in USA

1,505 interviews conducted via telephone by Roper Starch Worldwide from January 8-24, 2001.

# Factors contributing to people choosing to self-medicate

- Economics
- Greater access to drugs
- Greater access to information
- The time it takes to see a doctor
- Tradition/cultural practices
- Distrust of conventional Drugs
- Desire to be self reliant
- Advertising



# Implications



- For the society at large
- For the pharmaceutical Industry
- For herbal and nutraceutical Industry
- For the economy
- For the individual
- For the health Ministry
- For the Health professional
- For Academia

# Positive implications for the society at large



- More self-reliant consumers
- More persons likely to research and become better informed about treatment of common illnesses
- Economic benefit to country of reduction in unnecessary attendance at hospitals and health centres
- Increased effort towards public chronic disease oriented education



# Pharmaceutical Industry

- Incentive to increase production of OTC's
- Increased incentive to search for new drugs
- User friendly labelling for safe OTC use
- Marketing aimed directly at public
- Increased need to educate health professionals on managing the implications of self medication and educating the public on the proper use of OTC's

# Implications for the Pharmaceutical Industry



Huge opportunity for expansion and increased earnings

Greater risk of misuse, increases risk of litigation



Marketing may lead to over exposure of side effects



# Responsibility of Pharmaceutical Industry

- Ensure efficacy, safety and quality of drug
- Accurate, culturally appropriate labelling
- Responsible marketing
- Follow regulations
- Participate in public education

# The Emerging Alternative Market



- Pharmaceutical giants are realizing the market potential of herbal and supplements
- The regulatory environment is shaping the market for herbal supplements.
- Scientific studies proving the efficacy of herbs and supplements are boosting the acceptance of herbs as treatment and expanding treatment options.



# Implications for Herbal and Nutraceutical Industry

The trend towards self medication favours herbal products and nutritional supplements

- Reasons: ?
- Perception that 'natural' is better
- Growing presence of CAM practitioners
- Collaborative approach and easier access to CAM practitioner for consultations re product
- 'Grassroots' marketing strategy



# Responsibility of Herbal and Nutraceutical Market

- Ensure the established regulatory procedures are followed when introducing any new product
- Carefully select and train grass roots sales persons and health food store assistants and monitor their activities to ensure the highest level of ethics and professionalism
- Assist in the education of health professionals about the risks associated with the use of products

# Positive implications for the Individual



- Possible Cost savings
- Time saving
- Greater control may induce greater compliance in the management of chronic disease





## Disadvantages of self medication

- Less health care professional advice and supervision of chronic disease
- Less opportunity interaction with professional
- Absence of records of interventions
- Inappropriate expectations of drugs
- May be more costly





# Risks associated with Self Medication

- Increased risk of misdiagnoses
- Harm from in appropriate delay in seeking professional care
- Greater likelihood of harm from drug/drug and drug/ herb interaction
- Missed opportunity for diagnosis of chronic disease
- Risk of Improper utilisation of drugs
- ? Greater risk of drug abuse

# Safe Self Medication



- Person should have the ability to identify the condition being treated
- Identify the constituents and properties of the selected product
- Know and be able to identify the effects and side effects of the product
- Know when to consult with a professional

# Role of the Individual



- Recognise the condition being treated
- Determine that the condition is suitable for self medication
- Learn to choose the appropriate product
- Know its limits and side effects
- Read labels and inserts and take only as instructed. Report adverse effects
- When in doubt consult a physician

# Implications for Organised Health Services



- Looser Control of use of OTC drugs and herbal products by the public than for prescription
- Less opportunity for interfacing with persons with undiagnosed chronic disease
- Limited or delayed access to information about acute illness trends
- Opportunity for significant cost savings

# Responsibility of Organised Health Services



- Ensure the distinction between prescription and non-prescription drugs as well as between OTC and behind the counter non-prescription drugs are kept
- Maintain a surveillance system for prompt detection of drug adverse effects and drug abuse
- Public and physician education on drug/drug interactions



# The Role of organised health services

- Continuing public education to ensure responsible self medication
- Ensure compliance with guidelines for drug use and sale
- Able to respond promptly to evidence of previously unknown serious adverse drug and herb reactions
- Tighten surveillance for evidence of abuse and improper sale of drugs
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# Implications for the physician



- Changing Doctor patient relationship to one of collaboration instead of paternal
- Doctor needs to know that he or she may not be the only caregiver and that many treat themselves
- Doctor needs to be aware that the training they have received in medical school is inadequate to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world
- Doctor needs to know that some patients know more than they do about certain therapies



# Implications for the Pharmacist

- Pharmacist must know that the pharmacy has replaced the bathroom medicine cabinet
- The pharmacist cannot function effectively hidden behind a counter
- The demand is there for greater contact time Between pharmacist and patient
- The pharmacist of the future will be expected to assist the customer in safe self-medication



# Role of Health Professionals

- Closer collaboration between doctors and pharmacists will be critical
- Doctors and pharmacists and to an extent nurses will need to educate on safe and appropriate drug use
- Greater role for information technology
- Doctor should make enquiries about a patient's self-medication practices to avoid harmful interactions

# Implications for Academia



- The landscape of health care is changing faster than at any other time since the ascendancy of western medicine
- Medical schools must devise means to anticipate and respond promptly to rapidly changing new trends in health care options
- A core discipline of Medical education will need to be behaviour modification techniques and marketing in health

# Role of Academia



- Be aware of and respond to the changing role of the health professional
- Adjust curricula to reflect the changing role
- Keep abreast of new research findings on drug safety
- Advise policy makers on the reclassification of drugs



## Further Recommendation

- The Ministry of Health will benefit from itself with the ability to keep a constant tally of the following:
  - The number of all drugs licensed for the Jamaican market, currently being sold on the Jamaican market.
  - The number of non-prescription drugs according to class, herbals and supplements
  - What these drugs represent in terms of monetary value



# Conclusion

- The trend towards self medication is a child of the information age and the cradle is the prevalence of chronic disease. It is also the evidence of a more educated and informed self reliant public. The potential for benefit exists but all, but stakeholders will need to be re-tooled to adapt to the changing roles. Appropriate information technology holds promise as a method of facilitating the achievement of this otherwise daunting task.

# Looking To the Future

