

Questionnaire Survey of 'Registered Salespersons', a Unique Qualification for Selling Over-the-counter-drugs in Japan: Preparation for Professional Qualification and Attitude to the Profession

(Received: August 3, 2011; Accepted: January 6, 2012)

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Summary

Objectives: We conducted a questionnaire survey of registered salespersons working at pharmacies and store-based drug outlets to examine their preparations for taking the recently introduced professional qualification examination for persons selling over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, and how they perceived their profession.

Methods: A questionnaire was sent to registered salespersons (total, 120) of two drugstore chains in the Chiba Prefecture and all were returned in the survey period, June–November, 2010. The number of completed surveys was 116; 4 uncompleted questionnaires were excluded from the analysis (overall response rate: 96.7%).

Results: The survey showed that around 70% of respondents had had a considerable period of practical experience before taking the examination for the professional qualification. Most had attended educational programs offered by the store-based drug outlets or pharmacies where they were employed, and had also undertaken self-study. Almost 60% of the respondents considered the profession to be worthwhile and rewarding, and 74% were willing to improve their professional skills by attending study meetings. On the other hand, the provision of drug information about OTCs of groups 2 and 3 to customers at their workplace accounted for only 31% of their total work time, suggesting that they are under-utilized as providers of healthcare advice.

Conclusions: The registered salespersons who responded to our survey had generally had several years of practical experience as employees of store-based drug outlets or pharmacies before taking the examination. Despite their experience and professional qualification, they appear to be under-utilized as providers of drug information about OTCs of groups 2 and 3 to customers.

Key words

Questionnaire survey, OTC drugs, Proper use of drugs, Registered salesperson, Drug information