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

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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