

## Over-the-counter drug toxicity: A growing concern in clinical practice.

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### Introduction

Over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, easily accessible without a prescription, have long been relied upon by the public for self-medication and symptom relief. These medications offer convenience and quick relief for various health conditions, making them a common choice for individuals seeking treatment without visiting a healthcare professional. However, the increasing use of OTC drugs has raised concerns about their potential for toxicity when not used appropriately. In recent years, OTC drug toxicity has become a growing concern in clinical practice, demanding greater attention from healthcare providers and the public alike [1].

The allure of OTC drugs lies in their availability, affordability, and ease of purchase. Products like pain relievers, antihistamines, cough and cold medicines, and antacids can be found in almost every household. While these drugs can be effective when used as directed, misuse or abuse can lead to adverse effects, and in severe cases, toxicity. One of the primary contributors to OTC drug toxicity is the misconception that these medications are inherently safe due to their accessibility. People may not fully appreciate the potential risks associated with overdosing, combining multiple OTC drugs, or using them alongside prescription medications. For instance, taking excessive doses of acetaminophen, a common pain reliever found in many OTC products, can lead to severe liver damage [2].

Moreover, some individuals might be unaware of their allergies or medical conditions that could interact adversely with certain OTC drugs. For example, individuals with hypertension should exercise caution while using OTC decongestants, as they can raise blood pressure. Similarly, people with certain heart conditions should avoid medications containing nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) due to their potential cardiovascular effects. Intentional misuse or accidental ingestion by children can also result in OTC drug toxicity. Some OTC drugs may be attractive to children due to their appealing colors and flavors, leading to accidental ingestion and poisoning incidents [3].

Healthcare professionals play a vital role in addressing OTC drug toxicity. By enhancing patient education, they can promote safe OTC drug usage. Healthcare providers should emphasize the importance of reading labels and following recommended dosages, as well as the potential risks of combining OTC medications with other drugs. Additionally, educating patients about the dangers of sharing medications or

self-medicating without consulting a healthcare professional is crucial [4].

Efforts to prevent OTC drug toxicity extend beyond patient education. Manufacturers should prioritize clear labeling and provide adequate warning about potential risks, contraindications, and drug interactions on product packaging. Pharmacies can contribute by actively engaging with customers, offering counseling services, and ensuring that OTC drugs are dispensed responsibly. Moreover, the advent of digital health applications and online pharmacies has further blurred the lines between professional medical advice and self-diagnosis. Individuals may now access an abundance of information about OTC drugs online, leading to the possibility of misinformation and improper use [5].

### Conclusion

While OTC drugs have undoubtedly improved access to convenient and affordable healthcare, their increasing usage has raised concerns about drug toxicity in clinical practice. The allure of self-medication must be balanced with a comprehensive understanding of the potential risks and adverse effects associated with OTC drugs. Healthcare professionals, along with manufacturers and regulatory bodies, must work collaboratively to promote safe OTC drug usage through education, responsible dispensing, and transparent labeling. By doing so, we can mitigate the growing concern of OTC drug toxicity and ensure that these medications remain a valuable and safe option for individuals seeking self-treatment.

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