Title

PRACTICES OF INVENTORY MANAGEMENT IN RETAIL PHARMACIES OF PAKISTAN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CHALLENGES AND ITS SOLUTIONS

Authors

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Abstract

Background:

Inventory Management (IM) ensures the proper supply of medication to patients. In Pakistan, 1200 drug molecules and 88,000 medicines are registered. So, the stock management of such high number of registered medicine is a difficult task in pharmacy practice. Therefore, we aimed this research to describe the IM practices in retail pharmacies.

Method:

This study was conducted by using a qualitative method. For this purpose, ≥ 5 years experienced pharmacy owners and managers (aged > 18 years) involve in medicines purchase was selected. The consenting participant recruited till thematic saturation level was achieved. The purposive sampling technique was applied. Total 11 participants were face-to-face interviewed by using a semi-structured interview guide. All in-depth interviews were transcribed to originate the themes.

Results

Three major themes and eighteen subthemes were obtained. The three major themes included challenges, method and solution to IM. Eight sub themes marked the challenges like brand prescription habit, financial constraint, poor cold storage condition, drug shortage, weakness in drug distribution system, drug substitution, poor transportation, and customer service.

Five sub themes derived about the practices of IM such as software usage, manual system, stock record card method, FIFO (First -In First –Out) method and visibility & access method.

Five sub themes were derived to resolve the challenges i.e. qualified and well trained staff, legal policies, brand to generic switching, sound purchasing techniques and determine the value for each category.

Conclusion:

The current study depicted that the IM is associated with different challenges and these are manageable.