ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate self medication services at Surabaya pharmacies to patients with constipation. Four variables including patient assessment, recommendations, medicine information and non-medicine information were investigated. This study was conducted using a simulated patient method, visiting 90 randomly selected pharmacies. Data about the questions asked in patient assessment, recommendations provided, and the content of information given were recorded.

The results indicated that 25 out of 90 pharmacy staff (27.8%) assessed their patients. Patient’s data that were collected during patient assessment included “who the patient was” (5.6%), patient’s age (18.9%), symptoms experienced (8.9%), duration of symptoms (7.8%), disease history (1.1%) and lifestyle (1.1%). All pharmacy staff recommended medicines and none provided referral to visit a doctor. Most pharmacy staff gave medicine information (n=84, 93.9%). The contents of medicine information given directly by pharmacy staff included indications (1.1%), side effects (5.6%), direction for use and dosage (14.4%), time of use (40%) and storage (2.2%). Medicine information given indirectly (on demand) by pharmacy staff was direction for use and dosage (78.9%). Non-medicine information given by the staff (n=3, 3.3%) was related to dietary management.

In conclusion, Surabaya pharmacy staff infrequently assessed their patients prior to delivering non-prescription medicines for patients with constipation. Medicine information was mostly provided on demand. Therefore, there is an urgent need to improve pharmacy staff’s ability to assess patients and provide information in order to prevent medication errors and ensure rational therapy.

Keywords: responding to symptoms, non-prescription, constipation, community pharmacy, simulated patient.