

CHAPTER 2

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THE HEALTH CARE BUSINESS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Total health care can be divided into two general categories, namely: 1) MEDICAL CARE, provided by physicians and dentists, also by pharmacists in hospitals, industrial, and medical clinics, and 2) SELF-CARE, patients caring for themselves. Self-care (at least from the money for OTC drug) may rank low on a monetary basis with medical care, indicating that self-medication constitute a significant and important component of self-care.

Self-medication precludes guidance by a licensed pharmacist or physician. The trend toward self-medication places an increased professional responsibility on pharmacists, one which requires pharmacists to analyze each patients' condition and make a decision on minor illness referred to, for appropriate medication. Divisions of pharmacists based on knowledge of illness, knowledge of patients, and knowledge of drugs, comprises the essence of professional services which pharmacists offer the self-caring public. The drugstore counter is a day-to-day reality for most pharmacists. In certain respects, self-medicating patients can represent the most challenging and demanding part of a pharmacists' professional responsibilities.

The Self-medicating patient is most frequently a self-diagnosing patient. Such patient enters the community pharmacy having already determined (a) the nature of his problem; (b) its probable resolution with non-prescription or Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs; and (c) perhaps, the product type he intends to use. Then, the pharmacist must not only answer specific patient questions but also must help the patient retrace the steps taken to arrive at

the "~~self-diagnosing~~" and if appropriate, recommend a product and provide adequate instructions and warning⁴.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this Chapter, you will be able to:

1. Understand the complexities and sophistication of the Total Health Care Delivery System, through the theoretical and conceptual framework.
 2. Differentiate OTC drugs, ethical and ethical-OTC, and proprietary drug products that are available and promoted in the marketplace.
 3. Explain the changing role of pharmacists in today's highly volatile environment in the light of the full implementation of the PNDP and Generics Law.
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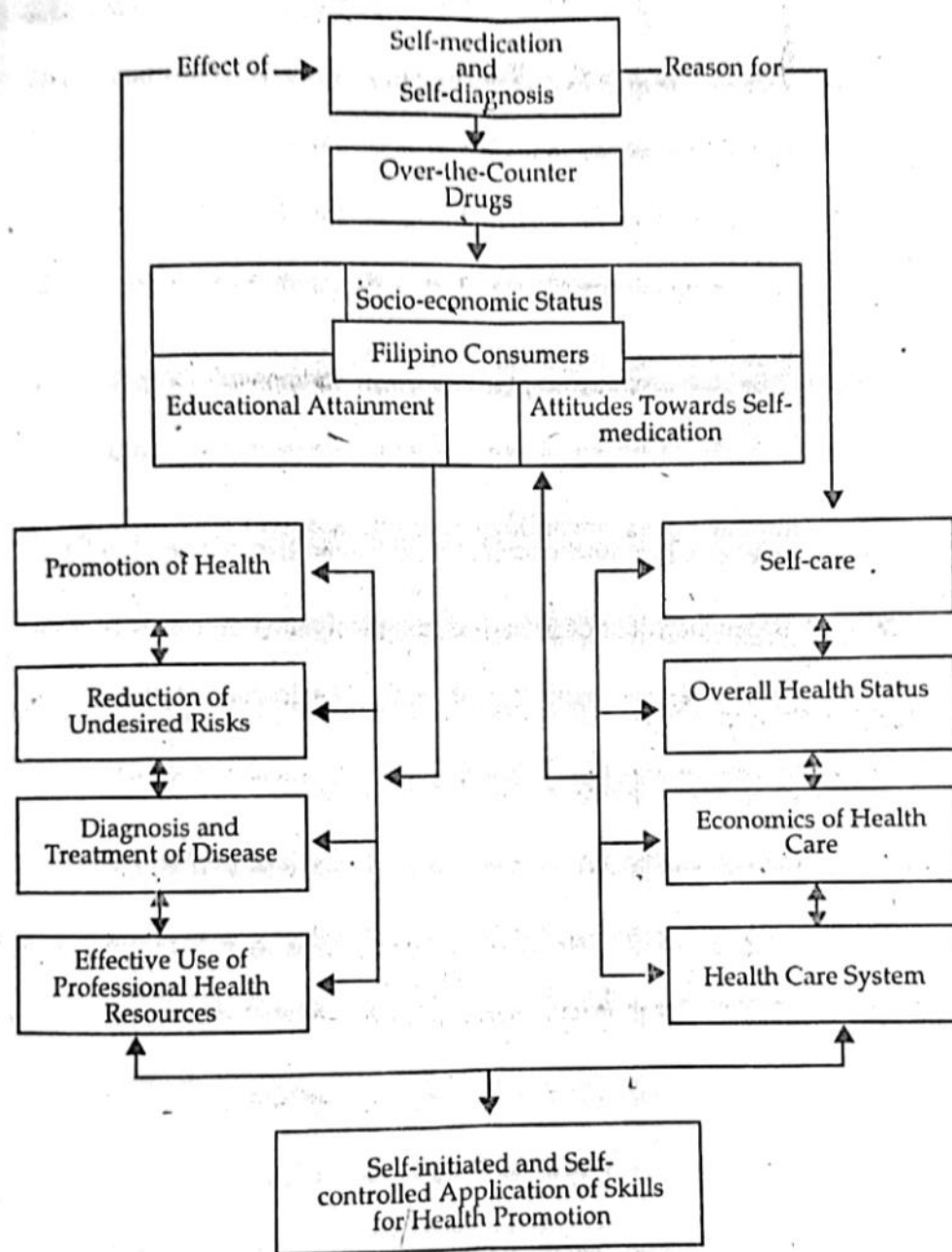


Figure 5: Conceptual Framework⁴

Source: Originally conceived by the author based on actual experiences in the drug industry and from readings of related literature.

Self-medication and self-diagnosis are now widely recognized as alternative practices for medical care in health care. Self-medication and self-diagnosis could be attributed to self-care, overall health status, economics of health care, and health care system.

In highly urbanized areas, people are so stocked with knowledge that they think it wise to resort to self-care through self-diagnosis and self-medication without the aid of a physician. This attitude would lead to a confident feeling of an overall health status in the individual. Considering also the skyrocketing costs of drugs and consultation fees, the individual sees the economics of health care, which could suffice the health care system through self-medication promoted by OTC drugs, which do not need the doctor's prescription.

Self-medication through self-diagnosis as promoted by OTC drugs has left the Filipino consumers, of varying yet comparable educational attainment, socio-economic status, and attitudes towards self-medication, no other alternative but the self-initiated and self-controlled application of skills for the promotion of health. The reduction of undesired risks, diagnosis and treatment of diseases, and the effective use of professional health resources clearly establish the interpose between the self-diagnosing public and the licensed pharmacists, the intelligent use of available knowledge and resources as a key to effective health care⁴.

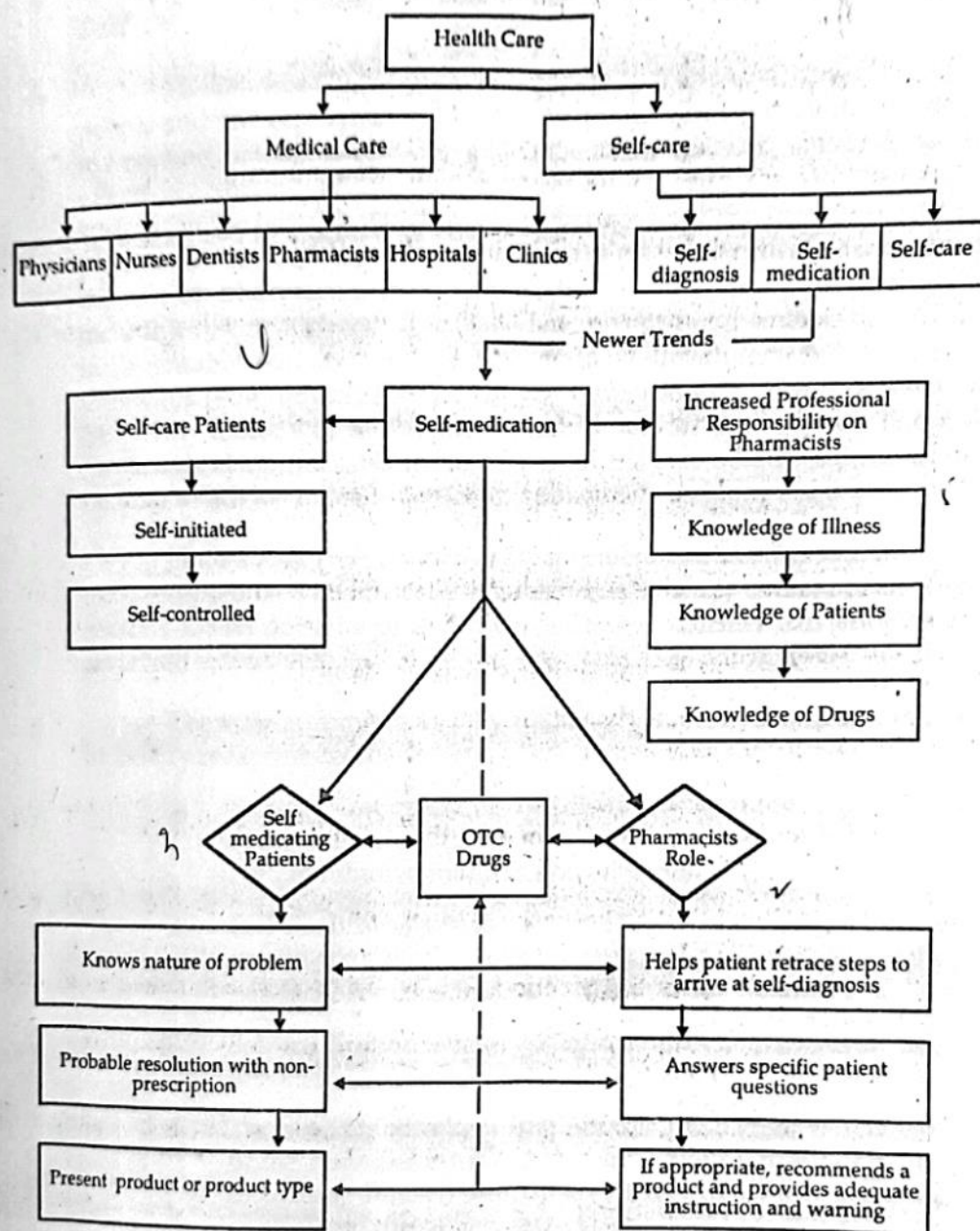


Figure 6: Theoretical Framework⁴

Source: Originally conceived by the author based on actual experiences in the drug industry and from readings of related literature.

Self-care

The relative contribution of Self-care to the overall health status of the people and the economics of health care are now being recognized. It stands to reason that the degree to which people engage in self-care safely and effectively, directly affects the pressures which are placed on the health care system. In the past 30 years however, changes have occurred in the attitude of pharmacists toward their practice, and in the pharmaceutical education toward the role of pharmacists in self-medication. Many schools of pharmacy now include an elective course on self-medication. Self-medication is considered an indispensable component of a pharmacy student's practical experience in internship requirement. As the public becomes more involved in self-care, it will frequently look more to the pharmacist for advice in this area. The decision (professional judgment) is the key factor in the pharmacist/patient interaction relating to advice for self-medicating patients.

Since about 1960, an increasing number of authorities and investigators have accepted the view that self-medication is unlikely to disappear. The main reasons for its persistence and for tolerating its further existence have been reviewed extensively.

The main arguments usually advanced in favor of this view may however be briefly recapitulated here:

1. Self-medication is more readily available, more convenient, and in some countries still cheaper than professional help in relieving certain minor symptoms and ailments.
2. Self-medication keeps the individual functioning in times when he would otherwise be quite unnecessarily indisposed by indigestion, headache, or constipation.
3. Self-medication relieves an unnecessarily heavy load on the medical services.
4. The need for autotherapy appears to be so great that when simple home remedies are not available, the layman will find other ways of treating himself which may be less reliable and less simple to control and direct.

However, a fairly general agreement on the fact that medical services, as they currently exist, could not probably satisfy the basic requirements because an equilibrium has been reached between spontaneous demand and commercial pressure on the one hand and official restrictions on formulation, indications, dosage, packaging, distribution, and advertising on the other.

An article by Glen L. Cureton entitled, "OTC Advertising Costs and Benefits" published in the *Drug and Cosmetics Industry* answers the following questions: (a) What role does advertising OTC drug play in health care? (b) What are the economic costs and social costs of OTC advertising? (c) How can advertising contribute to improvement in the delivery of health care? In summary, Cureton stated that advertising provides two basic functions in helping the consumer to utilize these products, and the education of the consumers on minor conditions, and the products available for such conditions⁵.

Self-medication is being practiced today with a degree of sophistication that belongs to the dark ages. It is national policy for us to practice every possible precaution to protect the patient in the care of drugs which require prescription orders. Nevertheless, some medicaments are available for self-medication that may not be as potent as legend drugs when compared on paper, but there is abundant evidence that they deserve to be labeled: "Explosive - handle with care" to improve understanding of the great potential of good self-medication, when to self-medicate, and when to seek professional care.

The Pharmacist Today

① The pharmacist is often the first person to be contacted by a person with a minor ailment. The pharmacist has a distinct contribution to make in assuring that self-medication achieves its greatest good and at the least possible harm through his/her explanation, advice, and warning.

Considerable attention is being given to remedy inefficiencies in the delivery and quality of health care in this country. We have seen the advent of extended health facilities, physician and pharmacist assistants, increased emphasis on health group practices, Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) and many funded studies or programs for delivery of health care. Currently, many people, in essence, have fit OTC drug advertising into an improved health care delivery system.

The evaluation of advertising OTC drugs carries with it the assumption that OTC drugs under Home Remedies category should be available to the public. The general consensus is that the public demands the right to treat itself for minor conditions. Home remedies serve as a useful although sometimes psychological-treatment purpose. They are safe as labeled, they save the consumer money, and they lessen the burden on a low medical manpower supply. A logical increase in the usage of those products is foreseen as the education and health consciousness of the consumer continue to be upgraded. These are the general benefits of home medications.

It is helpful to examine the basic requisite for health care in a society. The infrastructure of health professionals, health products, health facilities and transportation will indicate to a great degree the level of health care available. However, availability is only the first half of the equation. The second half has to do with the consumer, which is utilization. The consumer level of health education contributed to utilization but significantly of more importance is the consumer's motivation in seeking health products and services and then following through with the appropriate use of these products and services. It is the consumer who has control over the act of seeking health care evaluating the advice or products offered and utilizing or rejecting the products or services received.

It is evident that advertising provides the basic functions — that of helping the consumer utilize OTC drugs and to sell a product or service. An advertisement may contain some or all of the elements common to the selling functions: (1) it helps the consumer to identify his problem, need, and desire; (2) it establishes the product as good quality, or the manufacturer or marketer as an "authority"; (3) it shows the consumer that the product can solve his problems or satisfy his needs or desire; and (4) it provides a "close" reason to buy now.⁵

It is to say that advertisement for OTC drugs carry a weighty responsibility concomitant with influencing the consumer's concept of his minor health condition and of motivating him to utilize a specific product for these conditions. Inadvertently handled, it can cost the consumer his health.

Advertising OTC drugs contributes to the overall public health by providing education on minor conditions and products for their treatment, motivation for seeking treatment of these conditions, and by necessity, the accessibility of these products. The cost of this health service probably is cheaper than it could be effectively provided by any other means. Since the primary purpose of advertisement is to sell, the emphasis is placed on motivating the consumer to buy a particular product.

There are definite risks of placing these functions in the hands of manufacturers and the lay public with little or no control by health professionals. The primary risk is that the educational component will be misleading or missing. Another risk is that product claims will be exaggerated or erroneous. All evidence to date suggests that advertising does not contribute significantly to a "drug-orientation" and drug abuse in our society.

Drugstores traditionally have been an important source of non-prescription drugs for consumers. But since World War II, the view has developed that non-prescription drugs are so safe that neither a physician nor a pharmacist's

advice and counsel are needed. These views were reinforced as non-prescription drugs have been made available in non-drugstore outlets like the groceries and supermarkets, in the more than 45,000 barangays all over the country.

② Pharmacists as pointed out by James T. Delvisic, are well-aware that non-prescription drugs can be effective pharmacologic agents. However, we also feel that the self-medicating public must understand the limits of its ability to diagnose and prescribe medications and the risks exceeding to these limits. While it is national policy to take every precaution to protect patients using prescription drugs, non-prescription drugs are treated by both patients and health professionals in too casual manner.

③ Pharmacists have taken important steps to expand their knowledge of non-prescription drugs and challenges to improve the consumers' knowledge. These changes in pharmacy practice and consumers' attitudes are especially appropriate for our time. Because of our increased knowledge of the content and pharmacologic actions of non-prescription drugs and of their potential to affect the actions of prescription drugs, pharmacists are in a unique position to aid and advise patients, in the practice of self-medication. "The involvement of the pharmacist is of key importance in helping patient's condition and decide whether it is better to refer him or her to a physician or recommend a non-prescription drug. If a non-prescription drug is indicated, the pharmacist must be prepared to provide the clinical and product information necessary to help the patient make a "wise decision."

④ Many pharmacists already have begun adopting the role of a self-care adviser. There is a growing demand for Home Care products and associated services and many pharmacists are establishing Free-Standing Convalescent Aid with exercise equipment and fitting rooms.

⑤ It is obvious that pharmacists are carefully analyzing the increasing public interest in preventive health strategies. Pharmacists are being advised to help develop ways of neutralizing adverse drug effects. Older persons also are most likely to require hospitalization secondary to an adverse drug reaction.

The OTC drug department is unique in the pharmacy because of the opportunity it gives pharmacists to act in a primary care capacity while maintaining a competitive stance in the marketplace. In the prescription department pharmacists are constrained by a web of regulations and the complexities of physician-pharmacist-patient interrelationship.

⑥ Pharmacists should assert themselves by counseling patients on the appropriate selection and use of drugs according to perceptions or myths perpetuated by OTC drug advertising and promotions.

stance - way of standing

In addition, certain drug products are inappropriate in the right of the individual to self-medication.

In most societies the general concept of freedom is that a person is free to do whatever he likes provided it does not prove detrimental to his fellowmen. But the concept of what can be detrimental to his fellowmen is becoming gradually more sharply defined than it was in the past. There is a clear concept that a person does not have the right to take such risks that will likely make him (for the rest of his life) dependent on the support of the community. But his principles does not usually prevent him from climbing mountains, despite the known risks, and one can therefore hardly argue that it could prevent him from taking medicines on his own initiative despite the presence of certain (perhaps calculated) risks. It is difficult to define clear limits to the freedom of the individual in such matters, but a number of norms might be proposed.

The right of the individual to self-medication may also be approached from the point of view that the average individual is a sensible being, acting as a rule, with common sense. It is well documented that many patients do not read the label of OTC drugs and thus may miss even the most prominent indications with oral warning which is often necessary and always appropriate.

It is important to understand that the active intervention advocated is selective. It is not necessary to attempt to give advice to every patient in every purchase. Patients do not want to have eager pharmacists seeking to establish a complete drug and medication history to replenish the family stock of aspirin tablets. On the other hand, most patients will appreciate the judicious intervention of pharmacists who have the health of the patient in mind.

To ask the right kind of questions and to offer the right kind of advice requires more than just appropriate technical knowledge. It requires a concern of the patient as an individual and the development of interpersonal skills which will facilitate good communication. The only thing that differentiate the OTC drug department in a pharmacy from a similar department in a food store is the Pharmacist. Appropriate assertiveness as a practicing health professional is the key to retaining and enlarging a satisfied well-educated clientele. The misuse of opium was limited to particular groups as in the misuse of narcotics at the present day. In another field, it might be pointed out that modern man is accustomed to dealing with high risk products (motorcycles, electricity) provided that the risks involved are well-defined.

FINDINGS ON THE CORRELATION OF THE FILIPINO CONSUMER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS COMMON AILMENTS AND SELF-MEDICATION⁴

Even in a society which lay much emphasis on individual freedom, a somewhat paternalistic approach to the use of medicines is unavoidable if the public is to be adequately protected against dangers which it cannot foresee or estimate. But a reasonable degree of freedom must be left to select and use these simple medicines, the manner of use and risks of which can be adequately defined and explained.

Herewith are excerpts from the study on the Filipino consumer's attitudes towards common ailments and self-medication practices on the OTC drugs⁴, which will provide the reader of this textbook valuable insights into the behavior of the consumers and their self-medication needs, its influence on the population for effective regulation and control in the marketing of OTC drugs, likewise, the findings of the study will benefit the community pharmacy who carry most if not all OTC drugs in their establishment.

The study was conducted in the Greater Manila Area, with 1,250 respondents from the seven major areas particularly in Makati, Mandaluyong, Quezon City, Pasay City, Caloocan City, Manila, Pasig, and Tondo. These respondents were employed either in government or private firms, self-employed or not employed at all.

Summary of findings are as follows:

- 1. On the attitudes towards the choice of OTC drugs on the different services of information.**

Different services of information can influence the choice of OTC drugs as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 2

Profile on the attitudes towards the choice of OTC drugs on the different services of information.

RANK	Services of Information
1.	Doctor's Advice
2.	Advice of a Parent
3.	Knowledge of OTC Drugs
4.	Proximity of Drugstore
5.	Advice of a Friend
6.	Advice of Drugstore Personnel
7.	Television Advertisement
8.	Radio Advertisement
9.	Newspaper Advertisement
10.	Outdoor Advertisement
11.	Comics Advertisement
12.	Drugstore Displays

2. On the attitudes towards self-medication practices

Some persons may buy medicine without the doctor's advice. Respondents were asked how they would consider the practice. Table 2 shows the ranking on attitudes towards self-medication practices.

TABLE 3

ATTITUDES TOWARDS SELF-MEDICATION PRACTICES

RANK	Self-medication Practices
1.	Necessary Remedy
2.	Temporary Remedy
3.	Safe and Convenient
4.	Illegal
5.	Dangerous

3. Intention of buying.

Buying medicine without consulting a doctor may have different intentions as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 4

RANK	Intentions/Purposes of Buying OTC drugs.
1.	To seek immediate relief of minor ailment.
2.	To save time and efforts going to a doctor's clinic.
3.	To save money on prescription drugs.
4.	To avoid cost of consultation of doctors.

4. Frequency in buying OTC drugs

The Table 4 reveals the frequency in buying OTC drugs.

TABLE 5

RANK	Frequency in buying OTC drugs.
1.	Only when necessary
2.	Twice a month
3.	Once a month
4.	Three times a week
5.	Two times a week
6.	Once a week

5. Percentage in buying OTC drugs.

The OTC drug consumers showed that only a small percentage of their income is spent in buying OTC drugs.

TABLE 6

RANK	Percentage in buying OTC drugs.
1.	Small percentage
2.	Five percent
3.	Ten percent
4.	Fifteen percent
5.	Over twenty percent

6. Places which are considered convenient or advantageous in buying OTC drugs.

The Filipino consumer buying OTC drugs can purchase in different places which are considered advantageous or convenient as shown in Table 6.

TABLE 7

RANK	Places considered convenient or advantageous in buying OTC drugs.
1.	Drugstore
2.	Sari-Sari Store
3.	Grocery/Supermarket
4.	Kadiwa Centers
5.	Shell Shops

7. Primary basis in buying OTC drugs.

Filipino consumers of OTC drugs have reasons for buying medicines without the doctor's consultation. Several reasons are presented in Table 7.

TABLE 8

RANK	Primary basis of buying OTC drugs.
1.	Effectiveness of the Product
2.	Safety of the Product
3.	Price of the Product
4.	Popularity of the Product
5.	Presentation of the Product
6.	Manufacturer of the Product

8. Self-medication practices on common ailments.

Filipino consumers sometimes practice self-medication without consulting a doctor for common ailments, as shown in Table 8.

TABLE 9

Rank on Self-medication Practices of Common Ailments.

RANK	COMMON AILMENTS
1	Headache
2	Fever
3	Colds
4	Flu
5	Sore Throat
6	Itchiness
7	Skin Rashes
8	Diarrhea
9	Sore Eyes
10	Muscle Pains
11	Pimples
12	Minor Burns
13	Abdominal Pains
14	Dysmenorrhea
15	Athlete's Foot
16	Poor Appetite
17	Measles
18	Chest/Back Pains
19	Hemorrhoids
20	Ulcers

Self-medication practices as earlier pointed out constitute an important component of self-care which is one of the relative contributions to the overall health status of the people. The trend toward self-medication places an increased professional responsibility on pharmacists. It is highly recommended that pharmacists should take a very active role in the dispensing of OTC drugs. The pharmacists' guidance is necessary for any self-diagnosing patient. As the public in general becomes more involved in self-care, more and more consumers will seek the advice of pharmacists with respect to common ailments and the appropriate OTC drugs to take.

The pharmacy law has to be amended to allow freedom, even sari-sari stores in remote areas under the guidance of rural health units, to officially sell common OTC drugs which are massively advertised over the radio, TV, comics, and newspapers, so as to alleviate the plight of rural folks residing very far away from hospitals and drugstores.

Manufacturers on the other hand, in close coordination with BFAD and other regulating agencies, make available quality OTC drugs, tamper-proof, safe and effective and providing all the possible communication channels for its proper use, to include contra-indications and other warnings for the self-medicating consumers.

The drugstores and other sales outlets for OTC drugs should have qualified personnel, who have undergone basic training in the actual dispensing of OTC drugs. Training may be provided by the owner of the drug establishment or by the drug manufacturer through product symposium or seminars training and it should be a continuing education program in order to keep abreast of new OTC drugs launched in the market. The drugstore personnel, namely the salesclerks, through the pharmacists-in-charge also should take the initiative of updating their knowledge on OTC drugs through product literatures, leaflets, and other material handouts from medical representatives.

Ideally, manufacturers should invite drugstore personnel for a scientific plant tour of the company's R and D facilities and recent technological advances, to reinforce existing knowledge and confidence of product lines.

A close monitoring of OTC drugs in the market is deemed appropriate especially at the level of BFAD. The Advertising Board of the Philippines, Pharmaceutical and Drugstore Association of the Philippines should continuously safeguard the general public from drug abuse or misuse. The media such as the TVs, radios, prints, and other outlets for information about OTC drugs, their use, safety, and efficacy should come in handy for the Filipino consumer to know of those drugs subject to the rules and regulations that will be prescribed by BFAD.

To make more effective dissemination of information about OTC drugs, service trainings or seminars at the barangay level coursed through the various health center units should be organized and encouraged especially in remote areas where there are no drugstores.

The BFAD should set firm guidelines for manufacturers, drugstores, pharmacy departments of government and private firms, other institutions and even non-traditional sales outlets — the dispensing and total marketing effort for OTC drugs, in order to provide adequate information and protection for Filipino consumers practicing self-diagnosis and self-medication.

A redirection of the total marketing effort is in order to get the utmost benefits of the findings revealed in the study. Practicing pharmacists should now focus their attention to the new breed of Filipino consumers practicing self-medication using OTC drugs.

The practice of self-medication has risen faster than the wink of an eye, regardless of socio-economic status or educational attainment. This phenomenon will greatly expand the market for OTC drugs.

A change in the marketing organization may have to be realized promptly in order to participate actively in the fast-growing OTC drugs market which will be the key area for growth and expansion opportunities.

Drug companies should invest heavily on R and D to make major breakthroughs. The challenge is not only technical but also commercial, namely, to command marketing skills to present new technological products to target markets in a highly attractive and affordable manner.

The findings in this study are highly revealing and as such, a highly aggressive marketing company must not only be reactive at the product level but must also be proactive at the level of the consumer's aspirations and motivations in life in order to develop long-run strategies at the product and market levels to periodically drum-up viable marketing positions and programs.

The array of modern and more sophisticated research tools must be employed swiftly and effectively in marketing decisions for OTC drugs in order to operate more effectively and profitably.

The marketing firm must not only look for opportunities that it can handle with its present set-up but must be able to modify itself to take advantage of new opportunities presented in the study for OTC drug consumers.

PROBLEMS FOR FUTURE STUDY⁴

It may be worthwhile to enumerate at this stage, problems and/or issues for further study, that will bring about increased opportunities in our marketing arsenal towards early realization of desired goals in the Philippine Health Care Business as follows:

1. An investigation into the common selling practices of drugstores and other pharmacy outlets on OTC drugs in the Greater Manila Area or nationwide.
2. To evaluate the role of pharmacists in drugstores, towards efficient self-care programs and dispensing of OTC drugs to consumers of various profile, educational attainment, and socio-economic levels.
3. Self-medication practices through OTC drugs among students of various graduate schools in Metro Manila and its impact in Drug Abuse campaigns by BFAD and other government agencies.
4. To find out the attitudes of physicians toward self-medication practices through OTC drugs among Filipino consumers in the urban and rural areas.
5. The self-medication behavior of Filipino consumers using OTC drugs in the Philippines.
6. The role of drug manufacturers, advertising agencies, and the Department of Health in the effective regulation of OTC drugs in the Philippines.
7. A comparative study of OTC drug trends among Southeast Asian countries and its implications in the marketing of OTC drugs in the Philippines.
8. A comparative study of the Filipino consumers' perception on OTC drugs and its impact in the drug industry, by regional levels in the Philippines.
9. The marketing strategies of the Top 10 Drug Companies on OTC drugs and the benefits derived by Filipino consumers of different socio-economic levels in the Philippines.
10. Information dissemination towards appropriate self-care use of OTC drugs in all levels of socio-economic status.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Advertised Products, products promoted through the various media: radio, television and print.

Drug Department, an establishment or part of an establishment where drugs, medicines, pharmaceutical specialties, and chemical drugs are imported for itself or for wholesale distribution.

Drug, articles intended for use in the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of disease in man or animals.

Ethical Drug or Prescription Drug, any drug that can be dispensed only on prescription of a licensed practitioner (physician, dentist, or veterinarian).

Health Services, the phase of the hospital management that has been established for the supervision and protection of the health of the public and is administered by physicians, dentists, and nurses. While those services are effective means of ensuring a healthy, vigorous and well-rounded life for the members of each community, it develops at the same time a large measure of goodwill on the part of the public towards the hospitals.

Household Remedy, any drug or mixture of drug, galenic or official preparation of common or ordinary use, sold without medical prescription in original packages, bottles, or containers, the nomenclature of which has been duly established.

Medical Staff, the corps of workers engaged in carrying a program for health promotion or health protection in school, college or organization. A medical staff is divided into honorary, consulting, active, associate, and courtesy group.

Medicine, a mixture of drugs, chemical products, preparations, mixtures, or combinations of drugs intended for current use in man and animals.

Medical Services, a program providing services of physicians, nurses, and sometimes other health workers to care for the health of the people in a community or some other group of persons.

Proprietary Medicine, any drug preparation or mixture of drugs, chemical products marketed under a trade name.

Primary Health Care, the lowest level of health care within a care delivery system, available to the population. It is usually the first entry of population to community health services.

OTC, the acronym for the over-the-counter drug similar to household remedies.

WHO, World Health Organization, an agency of the United Nations.