

DTC AND ITS ROLE IN ENSURING DRUG QUALITY

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Hospital pharmacy practice in Nepal is not so developed. Today, in Nepal, drugs are irrationally prescribed, dispensed and used resulting in drug related problems of various magnitudes. It is broadly observed that 5 to 10 per cent of the cases admitted in hospitals, especially amongst elderly, are due to drug related problems. Good pharmacy practice minimizes drug related problems in the hospitals to a great extent.

Nepal lacks an effective drug regulatory system, which highlights how important are the prescriptions, the dispensers on deciding the quality of pharmaceutical products. There are numerous reports of an unacceptable prevalence of substandard and counterfeit pharmaceutical products in international trade. Nepal being one of the most frequently exposed countries to such products. Due to rising numbers of drug related problems; first need is to focus on the quality pharmacy services to the patients.

Drug and Therapeutics Committee (DTC), also called Pharmacy Committee is a vital body designated to ensure the safe and effective use of medicines in the facility (Hospitals/Health Centers) or area under its jurisdiction.

The committee

- > evaluates the clinical use of drugs,
- > Develops policies for managing drug use,
- > Administers and manages the formulary system.

Functions of a DTC

DTC works to ensure better quality of care and rational use of drugs through:

- Advising medical, pharmacy & administrative staff,
- Developing drug policies and procedures,
- evaluating and selecting drugs for formulary,
- Assessing drug use problems,
- Promoting interventions to improve drug use,
- Managing ADRs and medication errors

1. Advisory Functions of a DTC

- Advise medical, administrative, and pharmacy departments,
- Advise and support other hospital organizations on drug-related issues,
- Participate in hospital committees and departments on all matters concerning drugs

2. Drug Policies and Procedures

- The DTC has the most expertise to develop policies on:
 - New, non-formulary, restricted, investigational drugs
 - Generic substitution and therapeutic interchange
 - Standard treatment guidelines (and other interventions)

- Structured order forms,
- Interventions to promote more rational use of drugs
- Drug promotion

3. Evaluation and selection of drugs for the formulary

- Explicit evaluation criteria include
 - Efficacy, relative efficacy, effectiveness
 - Safety, quality, cost
- Consistent decision-making includes
 - Evidence-based, local context, transparency
- Evaluation process uses current literature including
 - Primary literature (especially randomized controlled trials)
 - Published standard treatment guidelines
 - Pharmaco-economic studies
 - Review articles
 - Reliable and current tertiary sources (text books)

Benefits of an Effective Formulary System

- Approved and efficacious drugs that all practitioners will have available for use
 - > Only the most effective and safe products
 - > Drugs that have been evaluated systematically
 - > Physicians develop greater experience with fewer drugs
- Drug therapy at lower cost
 - > Ineffective, high-cost drugs will not be available
 - > Availability of most-effective drugs leads to improved outcomes and lower cost
 - > Reduced inventory cost
- Consistent supply of drugs
 - > Regulating the number of drugs will improve procurement and inventory management

4. Managing adverse drug reactions & medication errors

- **The DTC also has role in managing ADRs by planning to:**
 - Monitor
 - Assess
 - Report
 - Correct the problem if possible
 - Prevent future problems

Ethical Considerations for the DTC

- Pharmaceutical manufacturers can be very influential on this committee so the committee must remain unbiased and transparent at all times to maintain credibility.
- There should be no relationship with a manufacturer or supplier other than the acquisition of quality drugs and the exchange of unbiased drug information.