

4136378 PYPA/M : MAJOR : PHARMACY ADMINISTRATION; M.Sc. in Pharm
(PHARMACY ADMINISTRATION)

KEY WORD : ROLE/ COMMUNITY PHARMACIST/ COUNSELING/
HERBAL PRODUCT/ ATTITUDE/ SELF-PERCEIVED
KNOWLEDGE/ COMMUNITY PHARMACY

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PHARMACISTS' COUNSELING RELATING TO HERBAL PRODUCTS IN
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The objectives of this survey research were to assess attitudes, self-perceived knowledge, and counseling role of Thai community pharmacists relating to herbal products including factors affecting this counseling role. It was also aimed at surveying the availability of herbal products in community pharmacies. This study was based upon the modified Fishbein Behavioral Intention Model. A questionnaire was developed as an instrument for data collection and was mailed to 1,010 community pharmacists. Within six weeks, 441 responses were received (44.32%). But based on selection criteria, 356 responses were then included in the analysis employing descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis.

The results revealed that community pharmacists' practice in counseling regarding herbal products was limited. Only 30% of respondents provided herbal counseling more than 10 cases per month. Factors affecting pharmacists' herbal counseling were consumer demand, attitude, and business promotion. The demand was specifically referred to number of customers requesting herbal counseling, not just a customer who came to buy an herbal product. Moreover, it was found that pharmacist respondents had, on average, positive attitudes toward herbals except for the quality and standard aspects. They mostly were unsure in quality and standard of herbal products. Factors affecting pharmacists' attitudes toward herbals were age, past behavior, subjective norm, and self-perceived knowledge. Age of respondents was the only factor that had negative relationship, while the others had positive effect. For pharmacists' self-perceived knowledge of ten selected-herbal products, the average score was 6.01 (0 = no knowledgeable, 10 = extremely knowledgeable). They felt most knowledgeable about Senna (7.03) whereas their knowledge of Gwao-Krua was the lowest (3.98). In the survey of availability of herbal products in community pharmacies, it was found that herbal products were widely available. Fah-talai-jone (85.8%) and Senna (82.8%) were the most distributed products.

The results obtained from this study would be useful for developing strategies to increase community pharmacists' potential and improving patterns of pharmacy services relating to herbal products. This would result in maximizing consumer benefits from herbal use.