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THE PECULIARITIES OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR WHEN CHOOSING AND USING MEDICINES FOR REDUCING WEIGHT AND IN THE TREATMENT OF OBESITY

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Obesity is an urgent medical and social problem, and in recent times it is regarded as a large scale epidemic of the non-infectious nature. The consumer survey has been conducted and the characteristics of their behaviour when choosing and using the medicines for reducing weight and treating obesity have been analysed. The factors that are critical when choosing medicines have been identified, the importance of consumer indexes of medicines has been estimated, the price preferences of consumers and the factors hindering the purchase have been identified. The research conducted is the basis for coordinating the activities of pharmaceutical manufacturers and pharmacies, improving programmes of development, positioning and market promotion of medicines with the anorexic action, and improving the quality of the information given to consumers.

Obesity is a chronic disease that is accompanied by excessive accumulation of fat in different parts of the body, increasing in the body weight and further development of various complications [1, 2, 9]. Because of the high prevalence, the negative impact on quality of life and health of the population and frequent disability of patients, obesity is an urgent medical and social problem, and it is considered to be a major epidemic of the non-infectious nature [4, 5, 8]. The number of people who are overweight in the world exceeds 1 billion persons (15% of the population) [3, 4]. According to epidemiological prognoses 40% of males and 50% of females will have suffered from obesity by 2025 [4, 10]. In Ukraine, the prevalence of obesity among persons older than 45 years is 52%, and overweight is 33%.

At modern pharmaceutical market of Ukraine medicines and special dietary supplements for reducing weight and treating obesity are well represented. As of 01.01.2013, in Ukraine 9 drugs of the group A08 «Drugs used for obesity (except for dietetic products)» were registered. Among them there are prescription and OTC drugs, medicines with central and peripheral actions, synthetic and herbal drugs, homeopathic remedies; medicines are in the form of tablets, capsules and granules. In addition, the market offers a great number of special food supplements in a wide price range with a wide variety of consumer characteristics: different dosage forms (capsules, tablets, herbal tea and sachets), flavours, and age and

gender orientation of positioning. [4, 7]. Development of this market in Ukraine and in the world takes place under conditions of a great number of negative information related to frequency and complexity of side effects, prohibition of certain medicines and the presence of counterfeit or substandard products with questionable effectiveness, which are distributed by different distribution channels.

The foregoing facts determine the relevance of the integrated research for effective positioning and promotion of medicines for obesity, planning and providing the information to consumers to form their loyalty and support the rational use of medicines, and the assortment management in pharmacies. In Ukraine, such studies have not been conducted. In publications [4, 6, 7] we analyzed the range of medicines for treating obesity, consumption of them in Ukraine, and we studied segmentation of consumers and factors influencing on their choice.

The aim of this work is to study the behaviour of consumers when choosing and consuming products for the weight loss and treatment of obesity.

Materials and Methods

With a specially designed questionnaire that included closed and open-ended questions and scales of evaluations the consumer survey in pharmacies of Kharkov, Lugansk, Donetsk and Poltava regions has been conducted. The study involved 87 respondents. All visitors of pharmacies, who bought medicines for the weight loss and obesity treatment or got the information about them at the pharmacy, were subjected to the survey.

Results and Discussion

Among respondents women constituted 95.5% and men were 4.5%. The most represented groups of consumers are persons with the age of 36-45 years old (32.3%) and 26-35 years old (27.7%). More than a third of purchases were made by employees (35.4%); segments of businessmen (21.5%) and workers (18.5%) were also significant. The largest consumer segments included consumers with the income per a family member 1000-1500 UAH (37.3%) and 1500-2000 UAH (26.9%). The majority of respondents purchased the medicine to reduce weight for the first time (38.8%); a significant part of consumers were using certain medicines from 1 to 3 months (20.9%) and only 11.9% of respondents were using certain medicines for the weight loss for over 6 months.

Among the factors that are crucial for consumers when choosing a particular medicine for reducing weight the

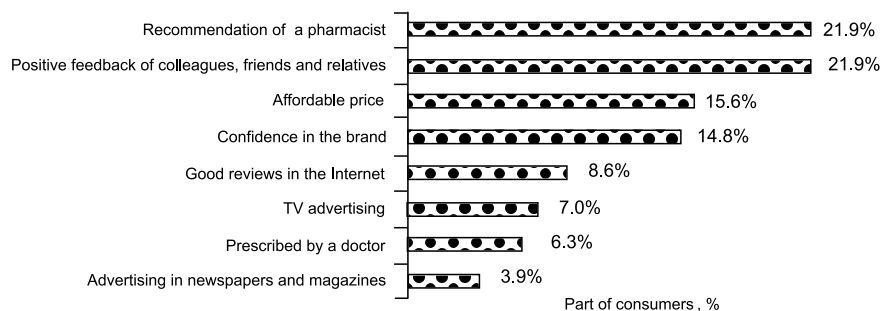


Fig. 1. Crucial factors for consumers when selecting medicines for the weight loss.

leading role belongs to the pharmacist's recommendations and positive feedbacks from colleagues, friends and family members, reasonable price of the medicine and trust in the brand (manufacturer) (Fig. 1).

In the process of providing the information about medicines for the weight loss in order to identify a medicine that will satisfy consumer needs in the best way, a pharmacist must consider the individual characteristics of a consumer (age, gender, lifestyle, motives of purchase, the presence of concomitant diseases, methods with which consumers will combine the use of the drug, the number of kilograms to be lost, etc.). Consumers decide to purchase and use medicines for the weight loss being guided by different motives. More than half of the surveyed consumers (64.8%) made a purchase because of dissatisfaction with their appearance in order to solve their cosmetic or aesthetic problems. Other factors that induced consumers to use medicines of this group were unwellness because of the excess weight (16.9%), advice of family members (11.3%) and advice of a doctor (7.0%).

According to clinical studies, even 10% weight loss significantly improves the progression of concomitant diseases associated with obesity and overweight, and improves the life quality. In this regard, the state of the surveyed consumers' health has been studied. More than half of the respondents (56.3%) indicate that they have no concomitant diseases associated with overweight. Part of the consumers has high blood pressure (15.5%), diabetes (12.7%), thyroid diseases (11.3%), problems with the locomotor system (2.8%) and obesity diagnosed (1.4%).

Thus, the results obtained coincide with the reasons of purchasing, i.e. a significant part of buyers do not have an acute need for reducing their weight and health risks due to excessive weight; they just want to look better. Majority of respondents before purchasing drugs at the pharmacy has used other methods for losing weight such as

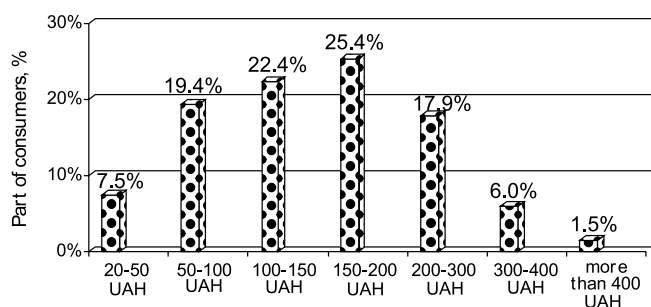


Fig. 2. Willingness of consumers to pay a certain sum of money for a medicine for the weight loss.

low-calorie diets (27.7%), physical activities (24.5%), herbal teas (22.5%), medicines (9.5%), including homeopathic ones (0.8%), physiotherapy (8.5%) and special dietary supplements (7.7%). To select a medicine that is the most suitable for a particular customer, it is important to be informed about the methods, which this consumer will combine with taking medicines for reducing his/her weight. The survey revealed that a significant number of consumers simultaneously with taking medicines or special dietary supplements purchased at the pharmacy, intends to use physical activities (37.3%), and low-calorie diets (36.0%). Physiotherapy is less popular among respondents (5.3%). Part of consumers (21.3%) does not plan to use other methods of the weight loss.

The assessment of importance of consumer parameters of medicines allows selecting the most important features from the standpoint of consumers and giving them the most attention when positioning at the market. Ranking of the importance of consumer characteristics of medicines for the weight loss has shown that the most important characteristics for consumers are safety, efficacy and duration of drug administration, brand recognition and the price. Such factors as improvement in the course of concomitant diseases, the prestige of the manufacturer, the number of administration during the day, the type of a dosage form are less important characteristics to consumers. The least important characteristic is the packaging design.

The attitude of consumers to the price for a medicine and the consumer willingness to pay a certain sum for it play an important role in purchasing. The largest segment of consumers wants to buy medicines for the weight loss in the price range of 150-200 UAH – 25.4% and 100-150 UAH – 22.4%. The smallest number of consumers wants to pay 20-50 UAH – 7.46%, 300-400 UAH – 6% and over 300 UAH – 1.5% of the respondents (Fig. 2). Thus, pharmacies must have drugs for the weight loss in different price ranges to meet the needs of different groups of customers.

The main factors hindering the implementation of purchase are the consumers' doubt about the quality of medicines for the weight loss, fear of side effects and high price for them. In the opinion of consumers, the lack of awareness about possible side effects, bad recalls from colleagues, friends and relatives, negative reviews in the Internet and distrust in the brand are also negative factors influencing on a purchase of these medicines (Fig. 3).

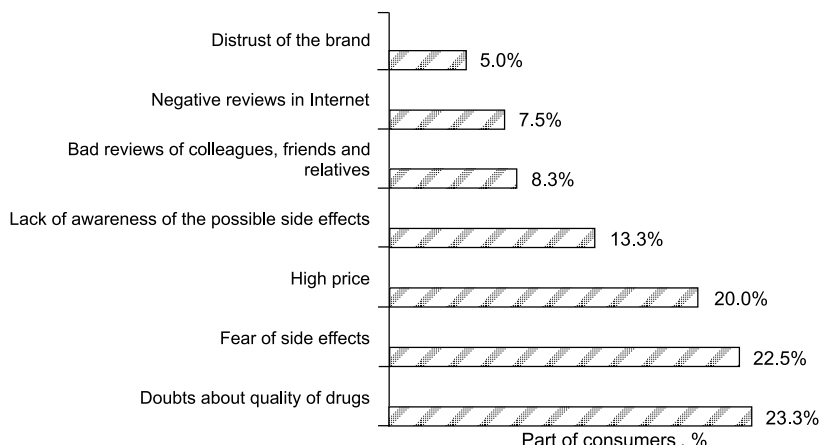


Fig. 3. The factors that hinder the purchase of medicines for the weight loss.

In the analysis of time, which consumers spend on purchasing decision and the start to intake a medicine for the weight loss it has been found that nearly half of consumers (48.5%) decide to purchase a medicine after their first consultation with a pharmacist. A certain part of consumers (over 22%) makes decision about purchasing of these medicines within 1-2 months. The time that consumers spend on decision taking includes not only reflection, but also the search for additional information.

Thus, identifying expectations and requirements of a particular consumer and recommendation of a medicine for the weight loss that will satisfy the needs of the consumer in the best way, availability of detailed information in pharmacies and good pharmacist advice will contribute to the consumers purchase.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Factors that influence on the consumer choice of medicines for the weight loss, motivation of purchases and intentions for using different methods of the weight loss have been analyzed.

2. The importance of consumer characteristics of medicines for the weight loss has been analyzed. Price preferences of consumers and the factors that hinder the purchase have been found.

3. The research conducted is the basis for coordinating the activities of pharmaceutical manufacturers and pharmacies, improving programmes of development, positioning and market promotion of medicines with the anorexigenic action, and improving the quality of the information given to consumers.

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ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПОВЕДЕНИЯ ПОТРЕБИТЕЛЕЙ ПРИ ВЫБОРЕ И ПОТРЕБЛЕНИИ СРЕДСТВ ДЛЯ СНИЖЕНИЯ ВЕСА И ЛЕЧЕНИЯ ОЖИРЕНИЯ

С.В.Жадько

Ожирение является актуальной медико-социальной проблемой и на современном этапе рассматривается как масштабная эпидемия неинфекционного характера. Проведен опрос потребителей, проанализированы особенности их поведения при выборе и потреблении средств для снижения веса и лечения ожирения. Выявлены факторы, имеющие решающее значение при выборе лекарственных средств, проведена оценка важности потребительских параметров лекарственных средств, определены ценовые предпочтения потребителей и факторы, препятствующие покупке. Проведенные исследования являются основой для координации деятельности фармацевтических производителей и аптечных учреждений, совершенствования программ разработки, позиционирования и продвижения на рынок средств анорексигенного действия, повышения качества предоставления информации потребителям.

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ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ПОВЕДІНКИ СПОЖИВАЧІВ ПРИ ВИБОРІ І СПОЖИВАННІ ЗАСОБІВ ДЛЯ ЗНИЖЕННЯ ВАГИ ТА ЛІКУВАННЯ ОЖИРІННЯ

С.В.Жадько

Ожиріння є актуальною медико-соціальною проблемою і на сучасному етапі розглядається як масштабна епідемія неінфекційного характеру. Проведено опитування споживачів, проаналізовані особливості їх поведінки при виборі і споживанні засобів для зниження ваги та лікування ожиріння. Виявлені фактори, які мають вирішальне значення при виборі лікарських засобів, проведена оцінка важливості споживачьких параметрів лікарських засобів, виявлені цінкові переваги споживачів та фактори, які перешкоджають купівлі. Проведені дослідження є основою для координування діяльності фармацевтичних виробників і аптечних закладів, удосконалення програм розробки, позиціонування і просування на ринок лікарських засобів анорексигенної дії, підвищення якості надання інформації споживачам.