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A survey on pharmacovigilance awareness amongst physicians in major cities of Pakistan

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Introduction: WHO defines Pharmacovigilance as “the science and activities relating to the detection, assessment, understanding and prevention of adverse effects or any possible drug-related problems”. Globally, Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs) are a major cause of morbidity and mortality and rank among the top 10 leading causes of mortality in many countries. Approximately, 6.5% of hospital admissions are because of Adverse Drug Reactions that can add exorbitant cost to healthcare expenses in fund strapped developing economies. It is vital to evaluate and monitor safety of medicines in clinical use to prevent and reduce harm to patients thereby contributing to public health. Pharmacovigilance is an important pillar in regulatory processes for medicines, pre-clinical, clinical monitoring and post-marketing surveillance thus ensuring the safety of pharmaceutical medicines.

Aim: To assess the awareness of Pharmacovigilance amongst physicians practicing in various institutions, hospitals and clinics in major cities of Pakistan.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted during Getz Pharma sponsored academic exercise in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore from December 2013 - April 2014. The participants were gastroenterologists, diabetologists, cardiologists, internists, surgeons, and others. A questionnaire was designed and surveyed amongst 242 doctors; the data was analyzed using SPSS v. 20.

Results: From 242 participating doctors, 212 (87.6%) responded to all the survey questions. Out of these, 211 (99.53%) appreciated Getz Pharma's initiative of Pharmacovigilance awareness program. Amongst the responders, 196 (92.45%) were clear on the basic concept of Pharmacovigilance, 209 (98.58%) were of the opinion that Pharmacovigilance program of Getz Pharma is beneficial in improving the health of our community and 196 (92.45%) participants were interested to learn more about Pharmacovigilance.

Conclusion: The results of the above survey suggest that majority of physicians have basic concept of Pharmacovigilance and consider such initiatives as beneficial to community's health. This survey can further be extended to other cities and regions in Pakistan to better understand the awareness of Physicians on Pharmacovigilance.

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