

## Generic drugs: patient opinions and satisfaction in a survey conducted in Genoa

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National data show that Generic Drugs (GDs) used in the Liguria Region are just above the national average, but their use is still very low compared to other European countries. In order to obtain data on real-life prescription and to verify the knowledge of ligurian population about GDs, our 'Assessorato alla Sanità' decided to get a direct evaluation, testing the patients satisfaction and their level of information on GD, using the method of a direct interview. The survey was conducted through the use of a semi-structured questionnaire in which we set demographic and social characteristics of patients as well as if and how they acquired information on GDs and how much they use these drugs. The main aim of the study was to evaluate which characteristics (i.e. demographic, social, economic, cultural) determine the knowledge, but especially the choice to use the GD instead of the branded ones. The survey was conducted by a single interviewer to a sample of 8 outpatient clinics of general practitioners (GP) in different districts of Genoa, and at varying times of the day in order to get the sample as representative as possible of the target population. A total of 2,134 patients were surveyed, 134 have declined to be interviewed. Therefore, the useful data for the analysis derive from a total of 2000 interviews, 250 by each district. Univariate (chi-square test for categorical variables and Mann-Whitney test for continuous variables) and multivariate (logistic regression) statistical analyses were adopted to estimate the association between GD use and the characteristics outlined before. Ninety-five percent of patients interviewed has been informed on GD, mainly by the GP and pharmacists. The results reflect a more than good knowledge of GDs, however, the distrust to use a GD is still widespread in our city (55%) and the use of GDs reflects this skepticism, in fact only 59% of respondents claimed to use them regularly or have them used in the past. This percentage is low compared to that detected from similar studies conducted in Northern Europe countries, where the promotion policy of GD had been more successful. The percentage of female respondents was 60%; interesting to note is that the probability for a woman to know a GD compared with a man is more than twice (Odds Ratio=2.6; 95% CI: 1.3 to 3.3) and that the study population aged between 36 and 64 years old (40%) are more aware than younger (OR=5.6; 2.6 to 12.2). It is also remarkable that people over 65 years old, and even the middle aged class (36-64 years old), compared with young people (<36 years old) less use GD, even if they seem less aware of the existence of GD. The education level was positively associated to the knowledge of the GD; those who have a high school certificate are more likely to know the GD of about 3.5 times (OR=3.6; 2.0 to 6.3) than those with junior high school certificate, and the graduates more than 7 times (OR=7.4; 2.1 to 26.4). The main reason to use them is that GDs are cheaper than branded ones, and the subjects which are informed on GD by the family doctor have 60% higher probability to use them than the subjects that receive the information by others (OR=1.6; 1.3 to 2.0). In any case, 38% of respondents to survey use the GD because convinced of therapeutic effect and not for economic reasons.

Despite satisfactory knowledge of the existence of GDs in our Region, data analysis shows that the degree of distrust is still very high and affects their use; the patients are still in doubt about their efficacy and, unfortunately the same degree of distrust is expressed during a similar evaluation conducted by the general practitioners. In the light of evidence on the GD advantages, both for the possibility of saving money resources and for their good efficacy, a promotion of these drugs is needed, assuring their effectiveness and fighting the wrong idea that an economic advantage corresponds to a lower quality of the product.