Identification and prevention of deleterious effects of supplementary health products on medical therapy: A challenge for clinical pharmacists

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decade it has become a challenging problem for the pharmaceutical profession that alongside their prescribed drug treatment patients take supplementary products (OTC, herbal remedies, food supplements, “panacea” etc.) without consulting their physician or pharmacist.

Our pilot exploratory study aims at exploring and analyzing interactions between drugs and additional remedies among inpatients and outpatients at departments of internal medicine.

Difficulties associated with supplementary health products:
- No comprehensive database exists
- Uncertain ingredients in products
- No marketing authorization required
- Unclear ingredient nomenclature
- Many interaction evaluation systems do not contain these products
- Patients do not tell their doctor/pharmacist about taking supplementary products (including OTC)

MATERIALS AND METHODS; PATIENT CHARACTERISTICS AND STUDY DESIGN

The patient interviews and the review of the medical records were performed by clinical pharmacists. We have gained information regarding current medication and additional remedies, past medical history, immunization status and known allergies with the aid of a medication history worksheet (see the extended worksheet attached).

Collected data was analyzed by an interaction evaluation software and database developed by our department in collaboration with HC Pointer Ltd. This database contains all the authorized or notified medicines and food supplements which have noteworthy market in Hungary. In the study of interactions we looked at products taken in the previous two weeks.

RESULTS, CONCLUSION

As for the prescribed medicines coumarin anticoagulants, beta-blockers, diuretics, NSAIDs and antidiabetic agents were most often involved in interactions.

Our results show that inpatients and outpatients both take supplementary health products extensively, and that many of the known interactions are occurring among these patients. Gathering detailed information about the use of these products should be included in extended medical histories in clinical pharmaceutical practice. It is essential we explore the potential impact of these products on patients as well. Special software and databases are of great help because of the complexity of possible interactions.

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