Cost awareness among doctors for prescribing medicines: an effective step toward economic management of patients' treatment

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Today, one of great challenges for patients is considerable costs of drugs. One way to help controlling cost of these drugs is that when two drugs are not different regarding safety and efficacy, doctors choose cheaper one. There is cost difference between and within drug groups and if doctors choose cheaper drugs with same efficacy as expensive ones, there will be large-scale savings (Lee, 2004). In addition, doctors should consider patients' drug cost for budget concerns because increase in drug cost has negative effect on patients such that high direct costs of drug for those who have limited ability means that they must choose between buying medicine and providing essential needs like food and cloth (Spence et al., 2006). And patients who cannot but their medicines will not have potential care and suffer from negative health effects (Lexchin and Grootendorst, 2004). Unfortunately, patients are afraid to say their doctors that they have not medicine (Piette et al., 2004). Cost of pharmaceutics is very variable in global market and as a result, it is difficult and complex to calculate accurate costs. Regarding global costs, concerns and well-being of patients, doctors should consider cost of medicines when prescribing. Therefore, if doctors want to be aware from costs they should consider absolute price of one medicine and relative cost and differences in costs. However, access to medicine costs information is not easy for doctors and if it is possible, there is no emphasis on prescribing drug based on costs and cheaper medicines and doctors did not decide based on it (Allan et al., 2007). Based on economic theories, when a patient evaluates cost of prescription and gets sufficient information about its advantages and side-effects consumes it based on his income and preferences. In
fact, their theory assumes that reasonable patients select cost and advantages of medicine versus against other cares and income limitations (Gibson et al., 2005). By increasing pharmaceutics costs, health planners and managers planned changes which lead patients using cheaper drugs and alternatives (Goldman et al., 2007). Cost awareness leads to value based prescription. Doctors should at least be aware of two costs when prescribing: patients who directly but medicines and those who use support service. When doctors prescribe drug for patients, patient is not aware of costs and relies on doctor's information (Shrank et al., 2006a). Regarding low awareness of information related to costs, training strategies for doctors can be effective especially regarding that which patients have pharmaceutics supports (Shrank et al., 2006b). Finally, it is necessary to mention that presenting suitable training for doctors needs support of powerful monitoring institution in medical education.


