
126. Medicines Information Seeking Behaviour: Data from the National Census of Medicines Use

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Introduction

Technology changes how medicines information is accessed. This first Australian national survey looks at how and what information about medicines is accessed. The study builds on previous work done by the NPS that found medicines information can be both actively sought and passively received.

Objectives

To investigate medicines information seeking behaviour of Australian consumers aged 50 years and older.

Methods

A piloted self-completed postal questionnaire was sent to 4500 Australians, 50 years and older, using state/territory stratified electoral roll random samples. Four waves of postings occurred between June 2009 and February 2010, to account for seasonal variation. The structured questionnaires consisted of a one-day medicines diary, a record of medicines taken in the last month, and questions covering a number of topics, including obtaining medicines information.

Preliminary Results

To date 992 questionnaires have been returned and analysed (response rate 38%). Almost half of the respondents reported seeking medicine information in the past year (49%) and passive learning about medicines when not seeking information (45%). The most common sources used to find information about medicines were GPs (32%), pharmacists (23%), the internet (23%) and package inserts (18%), and these sources were also rated the most useful. Information about medicines passively received most commonly came from television (23%) and magazine (17%) segments, and conversations with family and friends (18%). Information that was actively sought was more likely to be about dosage, interactions and side effects, while information about the reason for use and benefits of use were more commonly associated with passively received information.

Discussion

Consumers are both actively seeking and passively receiving medicines information from various sources. The content of the information found through these methods may differ and potentially affect the quality use of medicines. More research is needed on how consumers discern and act on medicines information
