

CHAPTER 1

You as Consumer of Medicine Use (Consumers' Rights)

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While sitting in a relative's medical store in a small town of Orissa in a hot summer day I found a customer asking, "Why do you give this medicine? It is written not for children". The shopkeeper defenselessly replied it is what your doctor prescribed. This is not an isolated incident.

Gone are the days when only doctors and pharmacists (modern day's compounders) had the privilege of knowing about medicines and the patients were kept dark. The medicine name was used to be written only in Latin. Change in societal perception and patients' attitude towards their well being forced the situation to make patients as a part of their health decision. The consumers (patients) are becoming more active in the treatment of illness, rather than being the passive recipient of therapy. Medicines are probably the most important component of present day treatment. These medicines are double-edged weapons. They are not only very effective but could be dangerous, even fatal, if not used appropriately.

**Ask your doctor or pharmacist to know your medicines.
It is your right.**

Access to information is essential for the consumers to play an active role in drug therapy decision. Informed patients respond more effectively to treatment because of their adherence to medicine use guidelines. Even the consumers can have choice for other brands/medicines (of course with similar activity) based on pricing. In an effort to educate the consumers on appropriate use of medicines a series of educational articles

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are planned. But a word of caution “This is not a substitute of your doctor’s advice”.

In order to use medicines effectively, wisely, and safely a consumer is in need of at least following information about the medicines he or she is going to use.

- Name of medicine – generic and brand.
- Purpose of medicine.
- Strength and dose.
- Possible side effects and what should I do if they occur?
- What medicines should not be taken along with this?
- How long to be taken?
- When should be taken?
- What to do if a dose is missed?
- Whether to avoid certain foods or drinks while taking this medicine?
- Whether there is a need to replace any medicine currently taking?
- How to store?

The consumers can get above information either from their doctors or pharmacists. This is their right.