

Methods

Private clinics prescriptions are collected from pharmacies located in the center of Basra city that is called Al ashar, the main referral private clinics in southern Iraq regions, that is visited by around 2 million patients per year.

The study was designed using simple randomization where; about 1000 prescriptions were collected from several different pharmacies in the area and. The prescriptions represent about 40 physicians in different specialties and for a period extended from November 2009 until March 2010.

The targets of the study are to evaluate all collected prescriptions to meet the standards of prescription writing; and identify the types and magnitudes of prescription writing errors. Prescriptions were analyzed for the essential elements to be included in the prescription order; where according to World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation; all prescriptions must include the following information ⁽¹⁾:

- The prescriber's name, address, registration number, and telephone number. This will allow either the patient or the dispenser to contact the prescriber for any clarification or potential problem with the prescription.
- Date of the prescription.
- Specific areas for filling in details about the patient including address, Patient Name and/or registration number (R/N), Date of Birth and/or Age, especially for children under 12 years and elderly over 75 years sex; weight;
- Name, form, Route of administration, and strength of the drug. The International Nonproprietary Name of the drug should always be used. If there is a specific reason to prescribe a special brand, the trade name can be added. Generic substitution is allowed in some countries. The pharmaceutical form (for example, "tablet", "oral solution", "eye

ointment") should also be stated. The strength of the drug should be stated in standard units using abbreviations that are consistent with the System International (SI). "Microgram" and "Nanogram" should not, however, be abbreviated. Also, units' should not be abbreviated. Avoid decimals whenever possible. If this is unavoidable, a zero should be written in front of the decimal point.

- Frequency of administration or dosing interval e.g. three times a day or every 6 hours.

- The quantity of the medicinal product to be supplied should be stated such that it is not confused with either the strength of the product or the dosage directions. Alternatively, the length of the treatment course may be stated (for example "for 5 days"). Wherever possible, the quantity should be adjusted to match the pack sizes available. For liquid preparations, the quantity should be stated in milliliters (abbreviated as "ml") or liters.

- Signature and initials of prescriber.

- When prescribing narcotics/controlled drugs, the strength, directions and the quantity of the controlled drug to be dispensed should be stated clearly, with all quantities written in words as well as in figures to prevent alteration. Other details such as patient particulars and date should also be filled in carefully to avoid alteration ⁽¹⁾ (Figure 1).

Compliance with these elements was the degree to which the physician had met the obligation of including all the elements of a prescription in the prescription order. It is worthy to mention that Physicians did not know about this study.

Simple descriptive statistics were generated by the Microsoft excel 2007.