

SUMMARY

Advertising on complementary, alternative medicines and over the counter medicines (OTC) published in the printed journals for lay people from the view of Evidence Based Medicine

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INTRODUCTION: Advertisements are important means of communicating information to public. The quality of the pharmaceutical advertising has been continuously discussed.

METHODS: The objective of the study was to assess availability of supporting scientific information for health claims stated in the food supplements and OTC (Over-the-Counter) medicines ads that were published during period September 2012 and June 2013 in the mostly read life style journals for women. For each advertisement, the emphasized claim/-s was compared to available scientific unbiased evidence. The literature search was conducted by using Pubmed database (mainly meta-analysis and randomized clinical trials). Further information was searched in the Scholar Google, Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database (Consumer version) and Micromedex. Different keywords and their appropriate combinations were used to identify relevant information. Frequency analysis was used to assess frequency of a particular ad occurrence.

RESULTS: Totally, there were 260 ads for OTC medicines and food supplements published in the surveyed period. Consistently with food supplements prevalence among the advertised products (n = 102; 80 %) most of the ads were to promote this category (n = 194; 75 %). There were 26 OTC medicines (20 %) advertised with 66 ads

(representing 25 % of all analyzed ads). Evidence was searched for 6 OTC medicines and 6 food supplements.

CONCLUSION: Some of possible health claims in the ads for OTC medicines or food supplements were based on clinical research results (mostly small studies where risk of bias cannot be excluded). The rest of the possible health claims either was not supported by the relevant literature or was not confirmed by the clinical research.