

# A study on perceptions of rural people towards common diseases and its medical treatment with reference to Mehmдавad district of Gujarat State

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## Abstract

*Rural markets have suddenly come into lime light after most of the urban markets are being saturated by products. Health care in rural areas of India is not well developed when compared to their urban counterpart. Though government had started many initiatives to drive the health of rural Indians, still the awareness related to various health problems and their necessary treatment is at a very nascent stage in rural India. The decision regarding consultation of doctors in case of suffering from common diseases like cold, cough, etc comes from a variety of sources and hence the perceptions and attitudes of rural people must be studied regarding medical treatment in case of common diseases. The present study will also help to marketers of medicines and doctors to address the issues properly. The present study investigated the perceptions and attitudes of rural people of selected villages of Mehmдавad district towards medical treatments. A sample of 100 people living in rural areas of Mehmдавad was selected and a structured questionnaire was administered with them. Chi square and ANOVA test were used to check the influence of current state of suffering from common diseases and their perceptions and attitudes towards medical treatment. The study find out that recent suffering from common diseases do have effect on perceptions and attitudes of rural people with reference to medical treatment.*

**Keywords:** Rural market, Health care, Medical treatment, perceptions, Attitudes, Common diseases.

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## Introduction

Health is considered to be the fundamental human right. Health and nutrition is considered to be the national concerns in developing country. Health policies in developing countries, including India, have focused on the issues related to population growth, common diseases, nutrition, disability, newly emerging diseases such as AIDS, occupational diseases, mental diseases, and so on. Though the common diseases like cold, cough, indigestion are easy and less costly to treat, people tends to ignore it and in long run it may create a permanent disease. Much of the health care spending in India, and in the rest of the world, is on expensive and ineffective forms of treatment. One third of the household expenditure in India is on medicines. Most poor Indians spend more on minor ailments than on diseases of a serious nature. Lack of awareness and perceptions regarding treatment of common ailments plays a pivotal role in consultation of doctors while suffering from common ailments. Spending on health is very less (3.9 % of GDP) in India, which is only higher than south Asia.

## Literature review

**Martin et al (2005)** studied the challenge of patient adherence to treatment prescribed by doctors. Researcher studied several past research papers on patient adherence and find out that there are some key factors responsible for

patient adherence to treatment. These include realistic assessment of patients' knowledge and understanding of the regimen, clear and effective communication between health professionals and their patients, and the nurturance of trust in the therapeutic relationship.

**Horne and Weinman (1999)** studied the beliefs of patients regarding prescribed medicines and their role in adherence to treatment in chronic physical illness. The findings revealed considerable variation in reported adherence and beliefs about medicines within and between illness groups. Most patients (89%) believed that their prescribed medication was necessary for maintaining health. However, over a third had strong concerns about their medication based on beliefs about the dangers of dependence or long-term effects.

**Shehadeh et al (2011)** studies the knowledge, attitudes and behavior regarding antibiotics use and misuse among the adults in Jordan. Data was collected from 1141 adult Jordanians. The study revealed that majority of the respondents believed that antibiotics treat common cold and cough. Respondents keep antibiotics at their place for future use; half of the respondents use antibiotics without consultation of doctors. Females don't know the safe usage of antibiotics.

**Dahiyat and Kayyali (2013)** studied the perceptions of patients regarding generic medicines in Jordan. 400 patients were surveyed using a structured questionnaire. Study revealed that cost of medicines is considered to be high. Most patients preferred to be prescribed the cheapest medicine. Majority of patients believed that cost should be considered before a drug is prescribed. Most patients accepted generic substitution and believed that it can provide significant saving. Surveyed patients agreed that they should have the option of choosing between generic and originator and believed that physicians should give them that choice.

**Kayalvizhi and Senapathi (2011)** evaluated the perceptions, attitudes and practices of self medication among 1st year under graduate business students in south India. The respondents' knowledge about appropriate self medication was poor, but knowledge of the benefits of self-medication was adequate. The respondents found self medication to be time-saving, economical, convenient and providing quick relief in common illnesses. The majority of the respondents had a positive attitude favoring self-medication. The most common indications for self medication were headache, fever, cough, cold and sore throat.

**Harju et al (2006)** compared the attitudes of rural and urban residents of North Carolina with respect to medical care. Fear of hospitals was associated with effective compliance for rural residents and good health habits for urbanites. Second, affordability concerns were ascribed to rural community residents but seemed to reflect personally relevant implicit attitudes since they were associated with poor health adherence and habits for rural residents. Third, mistrust of doctors predicted low adherence for both groups and was also associated with poorer health habits for urbanites. With inconsistencies among implicit and explicit attitudes and behaviors, some residents seemed to be ambivalent about seeking health care.

## Research Methodology

**Problem Statement:** A study on perceptions and attitudes towards medical treatment of common diseases with special reference to rural areas of Mehmdavad.

### Objectives:

1. To study the perceptions regarding the medical treatment in common diseases.
2. To find out the mostly occurring common diseases among the rural people in Mehmdavad.

3. To identify the source of awareness from which the rural people of Mehmdavad get information about the doctors they are visiting.
4. To identify the practices of rural people of Mehmdavad regarding visiting doctors in common diseases.

**Hypothesis:**

There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and females regarding medical treatment in the rural areas of Mehmdavad.

There is no significant difference in the perceptions of person who had fallen ill during last six months regarding medical treatment in the rural areas of Mehmdavad.

**Sample size:** 100 questionnaires were circulated in rural areas of Mehmdavad. 92 fully filled questionnaires were usable for further analysis.

**Type of sampling:** Convenient Sampling

**Data collection tools:** Primary data was collected through structured questionnaire

**Table 1: Demographic Profile**

Particulars		Male	Female	Total
Education	Non Metric	1	1	2
	Metric	4	7	11
	Graduate	29	33	62
	Post Graduate	10	16	16
	Doctorate	1	0	1
Mean Age		34.7 Years	27.5 Years	31.07 Years
Common Diseases	Cold	14	7	21
	Cough	10	9	19
	Sneezing	5	7	12
	Indigestion	2	4	6
	Head Ache	5	7	12
	Body Pain	9	10	19
	Low Fever	13	15	28
	Conjunctivitis	2	1	3
	Others	6	8	14
Consultation Fees per visit	1 – 100	14	19	33
	100 – 200	20	19	39
	200 – 300	6	7	13
	More than 300	5	2	7
Preferred Time to visit doctor	Morning	19	14	33
	Afternoon	4	4	8
	Evening	10	16	26
	When I am free	12	13	25

(Source: Primary Data)

**Table 2: Source of awareness of doctors**

Particulars	Frequency
Parents	46
Friends	17
Relatives	15
Neighbors	5
Advertisement	3
Other doctor	6
Total	92

(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** From the above table it could be seen that the major source of awareness regarding doctors are parents of respondents.

**Table 3: Reliability of the scale with 44 items**

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.776	44

(Source: SPSS Output)

**Interpretation:** From the above table it could be concluded that reliability of scale is good (0.776). And hence it can be used for further analysis.

**Table 4: Perceptions towards medical treatment in common diseases**

SR	STATEMENT	Agree	Disagree	Remarks
1	Change in season makes me ill.	55	18	Agree
2	I know name of medicines to treat common diseases.	71	9	Agree
3	Doctors give more doses than required to cure common diseases.	39	29	Agree
4	I take second opinion from other doctor regarding my illness due to common disease.	42	33	Agree
5	I store medicine safely for re using it when I fall ill again.	62	18	Agree
6	Doctors prescribe medicines of those companies only in which they get commission.	43	24	Agree
7	If illness is not cure by medicine available at home, then only one should visit a doctor.	59	21	Agree
8	I prefer a doctor who gives medicines from his/her clinic.	52	20	Agree
9	Medicines for common diseases are available at my place any time.	66	12	Agree
10	I give advice to my family members regarding the medicine to be used for a particular disease.	60	15	Agree
11	I take medicines as prescribed by doctors.	82	3	Agree
12	I have a family doctor.	75	13	Agree
13	I take advice of my home members regarding the medicine for common diseases.	64	8	Agree
14	Doctors prescribe medicine of foreign brands.	29	31	Neutral
15	If the illness is cured before completion of doses of medicines,	46	28	Agree

	one should not take medicines further.			
16	Common diseases will happen even if we take care of our self.	58	14	Agree
17	Doctors prescribe medicine which makes us sleep.	48	19	Agree
18	If I feel well after few doses of medicine, I does not complete entire dose.	47	26	Agree
19	I consult a doctor on phone also.	45	30	Agree
20	I know to which medicines I am allergic.	58	18	Agree
21	Injections are better than medicine dose.	48	31	Agree
22	Indian medicines are better than foreign brands.	40	18	Agree
23	Common diseases don't need consultation of doctors.	43	22	Agree
24	I buy medicines from the doctor's own medical store.	49	22	Agree
25	I follow advice of doctors regarding food restrictions.	61	18	Agree
26	I consult doctor only when It feels unbearable.	60	12	Agree
27	I throw away the remaining medicines after my illness is cured.	23	49	Disagree
28	Medicines also have side effect on health.	52	20	Agree
29	I know contact number of my family doctor.	64	22	Agree
30	I check expiry date of medicines before using it.	84	4	Agree
31	I buy medicines online also.	25	58	Disagree
32	One should consult a doctor every time he/she falls ill.	36	26	Agree
33	Medicines should be consumed with milk.	51	21	Agree
34	Advices given by doctors regarding restriction on food consumption are very hard to follow.	61	14	Agree
35	Ayurvedic medicines are strong compared to other medicines.	55	11	Agree
36	I purchase a full dose of medicine.	63	15	Agree
37	I use Homemade remedies (ઘરગણું ઉપચાર).	68	11	Agree
38	I prefer that doctor visit my place for checking me.	41	36	Agree
39	I like someone to accompany me when I visit a doctor.	47	27	Agree
40	I feel comfortable with the doctor having same gender as me.	45	28	Agree
41	I visit multi specialty hospitals in common diseases.	24	54	Disagree
42	The reports and prescriptions given by doctor are stored at safe place for future reference.	72	9	Agree
43	One should report to doctor even if the illness is cured completely.	53	21	Agree
44	My family forces me to consult a doctor.	53	16	Agree

(Source: Primary Data)

**Table 5: Hypothesis – I**

Ho: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of person who had fallen ill during last six months and not fallen ill regarding medical treatment in the rural areas of Mehmdavad.

SR	STATEMENT	Fallen ill		Sig	Remarks
		Yes	No		
1	Change in season makes me ill.	2.2759	2.6176	.155	Accept
2	I know name of medicines to treat common diseases.	2.0345	2.0882	.798	Accept
3	Doctors give more doses then required to cure common diseases.	2.7241	2.9118	.443	Accept

4	I take second opinion from other doctor regarding my illness due to common disease.	2.9138	2.6765	.381	Accept
5	I store medicine safely for re using it when I fall ill again.	2.2586	2.5000	.343	Accept
6	Doctors prescribe medicines of those companies only in which they get commission.	2.6897	2.5294	.537	Accept
7	If illness is not cure by medicine available at home, then only one should visit a doctor.	2.3621	2.5588	.476	Accept
8	I prefer a doctor who gives medicines from his/her clinic.	2.1897	3.0000	.002	Reject
9	Medicines for common diseases are available at my place any time.	2.0000	2.1176	.619	Accept
10	I give advice to my family members regarding the medicine to be used for a particular disease.	2.3793	2.3235	.815	Accept
11	I take medicines as prescribed by doctors.	1.7586	1.6176	.387	Accept
12	I have a family doctor.	1.7931	2.0294	.343	Accept
13	I take advice of my home members regarding the medicine for common diseases.	2.0690	2.2647	.368	Accept
14	Doctors prescribe medicine of foreign brands.	2.8276	3.1471	.215	Accept
15	If the illness is cured before completion of doses of medicines, one should not take medicines further.	2.6724	3.0000	.232	Accept
16	Common diseases will happen even if we take care of our self.	2.1897	2.4706	.233	Accept
17	Doctors prescribe medicine which makes us sleep.	2.2931	3.0000	.005	Reject
18	If I feel well after few doses of medicine, I does not complete entire dose.	2.4138	2.9706	.027	Reject
19	I consult a doctor on phone also.	2.9655	2.2647	.011	Reject
20	I know to which medicines I am allergic.	2.5000	2.1765	.186	Accept
21	Injections are better than medicine dose.	2.7759	2.7353	.892	Accept
22	Indian medicines are better than foreign brands.	2.5862	2.4706	.648	Accept
23	Common diseases don't need consultation of doctors.	2.6034	2.8824	.231	Accept
24	I buy medicines from the doctor's own medical store.	2.4310	2.8529	.079	Accept
25	I follow advice of doctors regarding food restrictions.	2.2241	2.4412	.375	Accept
26	I consult doctor only when It feels unbearable.	2.3621	2.2059	.492	Accept
27	I throw away the remaining medicines after my illness is cured.	3.3448	3.4412	.727	Accept
28	Medicines also have side effect on health.	2.5345	2.4706	.811	Accept
29	I know contact number of my family doctor.	2.4655	2.2353	.418	Accept
30	I check expiry date of medicines before using it.	1.5862	1.5000	.628	Accept
31	I buy medicines online also.	3.5172	3.7059	.524	Accept
32	One should consult a doctor every time he/she falls ill.	2.6897	3.1176	.069	Accept
33	Medicines should be consumed with milk.	2.5172	2.6765	.541	Accept
34	Advices given by doctors regarding restriction on food consumption are very hard to follow.	2.2759	2.3235	.844	Accept
35	Ayurvedic medicines are strong compared to other medicines.	2.2759	2.2353	.854	Accept
36	I purchase a full dose of medicine.	2.3448	2.0588	.264	Accept
37	I use Homemade remedies (ଘରଗଞ୍ଜୁ ଓପ୍ୟାର).	1.9138	2.1176	.408	Accept
38	I prefer that doctor visit my place for checking me.	2.9483	2.8824	.800	Accept
39	I like someone to accompany me when I visit a doctor.	2.6897	2.6176	.779	Accept
40	I'm comfortable with the doctor having same gender as me.	2.8793	2.5588	.238	Accept

41	I visit multi specialty hospitals in common diseases.	3.2931	3.6471	.201	Accept
42	The reports and prescriptions given by doctor are stored at safe place for future reference.	2.1034	1.9412	.437	Accept
43	One should report to doctor even if the illness is cured completely.	2.7414	2.4706	.276	Accept
44	My family forces me to consult a doctor.	2.3621	2.3824	.935	Accept

(Source: Primary data)

**Interpretation:** From the above table it could be interpreted that there is no significance difference in the perception of person who had fallen ill in last six months except consultation of doctors on phone, not completing full dose if they feel better after few doses, perceptions that medicines prescribed by doctors make them sleep and preference of doctor who sell medicines from his/her clinic.

**Table 6: Hypothesis – II**

Ho: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and females regarding medical treatment in the rural areas of Mehmdavad.

SR NO.	STATEMENT	Male Mean	Female Mean	Sig.	Remarks
1	Change in season makes me ill.	2.3556	2.4468	0.696	Ho Accepted
2	I know name of medicines to treat common diseases.	2.0000	2.1064	0.600	Ho Accepted
3	Doctors give more doses then required to cure common diseases.	2.7111	2.8723	0.495	Ho Accepted
4	I take second opinion from other doctor regarding my illness due to common disease.	2.6889	2.9574	0.304	Ho Accepted
5	I store medicine safely for re using it when I fall ill again.	2.2889	2.4043	0.639	Ho Accepted
6	Doctors prescribe medicines of those companies only in which they get commission.	2.6000	2.6596	0.812	Ho Accepted
7	If illness is not cure by medicine available at home, then only one should visit a doctor.	2.3111	2.5532	0.363	Ho Accepted
8	I prefer a doctor who gives medicines from his/her clinic.	2.4444	2.5319	0.733	Ho Accepted
9	Medicines for common diseases are available at my place any time.	2.1111	1.9787	0.563	Ho Accepted
10	I give advice to my family members regarding the medicine to be used for a particular disease.	2.5333	2.1915	0.135	Ho Accepted
11	I take medicines as prescribed by doctors.	1.7111	1.7021	0.955	Ho Accepted
12	I have a family doctor.	1.7778	1.9787	0.404	Ho Accepted
13	I take advice of my home members regarding the medicine for common diseases.	2.2000	2.0851	0.585	Ho Accepted
14	Doctors prescribe medicine of foreign brands.	2.8222	3.0638	0.333	Ho Accepted
15	If the illness is cured before completion of doses of medicines, one should not take medicines further.	2.6000	2.9787	0.151	Ho Accepted
16	Common diseases will happen even if we take care of our self.	2.3556	2.2340	0.594	Ho Accepted
17	Doctors prescribe medicine which makes us sleep.	2.6667	2.4468	0.375	Ho Accepted
18	If I feel well after few doses of medicine, I does not	2.3778	2.8511	0.053	Ho Accepted

	complete entire dose.				
19	I consult a doctor on phone also.	2.4889	2.9149	0.113	Ho Accepted
20	I know to which medicines I am allergic.	2.0222	2.7234	0.002	Ho Rejected
21	Injections are better than medicine dose.	2.7778	2.7447	0.909	Ho Accepted
22	Indian medicines are better than foreign brands.	2.6667	2.4255	0.322	Ho Accepted
23	Common diseases don't need consultation of doctors.	2.7111	2.7021	0.968	Ho Accepted
24	I buy medicines from the doctor's own medical store.	2.6889	2.4894	0.392	Ho Accepted
25	I follow advice of doctors regarding food restrictions.	2.3778	2.2340	0.544	Ho Accepted
26	I consult doctor only when It feels unbearable.	2.1556	2.4468	0.183	Ho Accepted
27	I throw away the remaining medicines after my illness is cured.	3.4222	3.3404	0.758	Ho Accepted
28	Medicines also have side effect on health.	2.4444	2.5745	0.614	Ho Accepted
29	I know contact number of my family doctor.	2.1778	2.5745	0.147	Ho Accepted
30	I check expiry date of medicines before using it.	1.5333	1.5745	0.811	Ho Accepted
31	I buy medicines online also.	3.4889	3.6809	0.502	Ho Accepted
32	One should consult a doctor every time he/she falls ill.	2.9111	2.7872	0.588	Ho Accepted
33	Medicines should be consumed with milk.	2.6444	2.5106	0.595	Ho Accepted
34	Advices given by doctors regarding restriction on food consumption are very hard to follow.	2.4000	2.1915	0.373	Ho Accepted
35	Ayurvedic medicines are strong compared to other medicines.	2.2000	2.3191	0.576	Ho Accepted
36	I purchase a full dose of medicine.	2.0222	2.4468	0.085	Ho Accepted
37	I use Homemade remedies.	2.1333	1.8511	0.235	Ho Accepted
38	I prefer that doctor visit my place for checking me.	2.6889	3.1489	0.065	Ho Accepted
39	I like someone to accompany me when I visit a doctor.	2.9778	2.3617	0.011	Ho Rejected
40	I feel comfortable with the doctor having same gender as me.	2.8444	2.6809	0.534	Ho Accepted
41	I visit multi specialty hospitals in common diseases.	3.4889	3.3617	0.636	Ho Accepted
42	The reports and prescriptions given by doctor are stored at safe place for future reference.	1.9556	2.1277	0.393	Ho Accepted
43	One should report to doctor even if the illness is cured completely.	2.6889	2.5957	0.699	Ho Accepted
44	My family forces me to consult a doctor.	2.4221	2.3191	0.669	Ho Accepted

(Source: Primary data)

**Interpretation:** There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female except, accompany while visiting doctors (female prefer to be accompanied by someone) and medicines to which they are allergic (males know better regarding medicines to which they are allergic).

## Findings

Perceptions regarding medicine consumption and common diseases:

- Most of the respondents agree with majority of the statements. Majority of the respondents have a perception that common diseases do not require consultation of doctors. They also believe that common diseases will happen even if one takes care of himself/herself.
- As far as medicines are concerned, people stores medicines for reusing it. They also believe that one should stop consuming medicines if common illness is cured even if some doses are remaining. People do have tendency to stop taking medicines in between if they feel better.

- They prefer to buy medicines from doctor's medical stores only. They do not prefer to buy medicines online. The most important finding is that people do check the expiry date before using it.
- Family members have role in advising medicines during common diseases. Most occurring common diseases are low fever followed by cold.

Perceptions regarding doctors:

- People perceive that the medicines prescribed by doctors make them sleep. Majority of the respondents have family doctor. They do believe that the restrictions regarding food are very hard to follow.
- Female respondents also want someone to accompany them while visiting a doctor. Doctors of same gender are preferable.
- Majority of the respondents consult doctor when they feel unbearable. Respondents contact doctors on phone also.
- Parents are the source of awareness for respondents regarding the doctors.

## Conclusion

People in rural areas of Mehmдавad believe that common diseases do not require medical treatment. People do not contact doctors till they feel unbearable. The major source of information regarding doctors is parents. People have belief that doctors prescribe only those medicines in which they are getting higher commission. Also, the practice of discontinuing medication in between is prevalent in rural areas. People also have misconception that medicines given by doctor's makes them sleep. The overall perception regarding medication in common diseases is not very encouraging.

## Limitations

Findings on the basis of small sample size of 92 may not be generalized for whole Mehmдавad. This study is only located to rural areas of Mehmдавad only hence its findings cannot be generalized to other rural areas.

## Scope for further research

Similar study with large sample size and at different rural areas of Gujarat can be undertaken to check the validity of the results obtained in the present study.

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