

#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Generic medicines are essential for their economic value for both government reimbursement and patient medicine expenditure. Generic substitution is mostly met by suspicion sometimes by patients with concerns about effectiveness or side effects.

**Objective:** This study sought to investigate beliefs, perceptions and experiences about generic substitution and the impact on medication adherence.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted among 351 patients with hypertension aged 18 years and above at the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital using a mixed-method study design with the qualitative aspect being conducted among 17 participants. The quantitative data were analyzed using STATA version 15. Data from the qualitative study were coded and analyzed thematically.

**Results:** Most patients were aged between 60-79 years, taking 2 antihypertensive medications and had hypertension for more than 10 years. About a third of the participants did not experience side effects at the time of data collection and considered information received about generic substitution sufficient. The majority of the participants had positive views about generic medicines. Receiving sufficient information about generic substitution correlated significantly with adherence ( $p=0.022$ ). Most (51.8%) of the patients believed they should take part in deciding between generic or originator medicines. Significant associations between this statement and the educational level ( $p<0.05$ ), income level ( $p=0.001$ ), valid insurance coverage ( $p<0.05$ ) and the presence of other diseases ( $p<0.05$ ) were observed. The majority (82.3%) did not mind generic substitution with a local or imported generic as long as it was effective. The predetermined categories for the qualitative data analysis were along the following themes: awareness of generic substitution, the effectiveness of generic substitution and generic substitution in relation to adherence.

Participants in the qualitative study narrated that generic substitution did not challenge their adherence but their only concern is about the experience of new side effects that could occur after generic substitution.

**Conclusion:** This study showed patient satisfaction with information about substitution was generally an important factor in medication adherence but concerns about the incidence of new side effects with the practice were highlighted. Moreover, patients had positive views about generic medicines being efficacious and viewed as non-threatening to safety and adherence. This information gathered from patients is essential for healthcare professionals to shape their interactions with patients with regards to their drug management when generic switching is required.