

Jpn. J. Drug Inform., 5(3), 167 - 174 (2003)

A survey on pharmaceutical information in daily newspapers

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[Purpose] We carried out a survey of pharmaceutical information in daily newspapers to clarify pharmaceutical information useful for the general public after its press release by the Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare.

[Methods] We searched for newspaper articles on “Emergency safety information” and “Pharmaceuticals and medical devices safety information” during a 6-year period from “Asahi Newspaper Web” and “Mainich/Yomiuri Newspaper, Nikkei Telecom 21” as newspaper article search sites and from reduced-size editions of newspapers using key words such as “side effects and drugs”, “emergency safety information”, and “medical devices and problems”.

[Results] As a result of search for newspaper articles using “side effects and drugs” as a key word, a total of 3,700 articles in the 3 newspaper publishing companies were found. After 1998, 100% of “Emergency safety information” articles appeared in newspapers. The date of every article on this information was the day or next day of its release by the Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare. The mean number of letters/article tended to increase in recent years, being about 500 in 2002. On the other hand, about 60% of “Pharmaceuticals and medical devices safety information” articles appeared in newspapers. The date of the article on this information was the day or next day of its release by the Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare for all articles excluding 3. The mean number of letters/article remained about 200-300 with negligible changes, being about 250 in 2002. In the articles, many technical terms concerning side effects were used.

[Conclusion] It is hoped that newspapers carry articles that can provide a certain amount and quality of pharmaceutical information to the general public.