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Introduction to The Concept and Practice Guideline of Drug Utilization Review

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The concept of drug utilization review (DUR) has been evolved in the United States of America. The objective of the DUR program is to assure that prescriptions are appropriate, medically necessary and is not likely to result in adverse medical results. Two types of program, prospective and retrospective DUR have been required from January 1, 1993 in the USA for reimbursing pharmaceutical services in ambulatory care settings for Medicaid outpatients by the federal law, so called OBRA 90 (Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990). This federal law also requires patient counselling on medications by community pharmacists. This program has stimulated pharmacists do actions on improving the quality of pharmacy education and practice. Currently, the DUR program is being applied to virtually all the prescriptions issued for outpatients in the USA.

Since new issue around medication safety has been evolved according to recent study reports on the fatal adverse drug reactions, new accreditation standards to assure medication safety and quality in the hospitals, so called medication management standards was added to the 2004 accreditation manual of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). Today, the pharmaceutical care activities including DUR practice and medication teaching by the pharmacists are being recognized as the crucial keystones for assuring medication safety and the quality of drug therapies.

In Korea, current laws on pharmaceutical affairs are mandating DUR practice and medication teaching by pharmacists. However, the required activities of pharmacists have been evaluated to be sub-optimal. From January 1, 2004, new regulation mandating DUR program was introduced by the governmental agency and currently practice guideline is being developed by the national committee of DUR board. Overall feature and objectives of DUR program in Korea are basically the same as in the USA. Thus, it is expected that all the hospitals and community pharmacies should implement DUR programs and systems in their own practice settings to comply with the national policy to minimize the events of drug misadventuring which may result in fatal adverse events. A comprehensive introduction to DUR concept and practice guideline will be presented to help pharmacists prepare for the new era of pharmaceutical care in near future.