

The Value of Self-Care

The consumer health industry enables self-care and accelerates the achievement of **Universal Health Coverage**, making it a key contributor to society and health systems by:

Protecting individual health and well-being

RELIABILITY, SAFETY AND EFFICACY

Evidence-based self-care products produced in line with international recognized standards are

reliable, safe and effective solutions

for the treatment of routine conditions and minor ailments.

DIRECT, RAPID ACCESS TO TREATMENT

Over-the-counter medicines (OTCs) provide individuals with

easy and quick access to treatment

The majority of people who secure an appointment with their doctor (53%) are then recommended to use an over-the-counter medicine¹ to treat their condition.



ACTIVE ROLE IN HEALTHCARE

OTCs empower individuals to take an active role in their own health, preventing or relieving minor symptoms or conditions. Research shows that

81% of adults use OTC medicines as a first response to minor ailments. And one U.S. study analyzing the seven most common acute and chronic, self-treatable conditions found that

92% of those who use OTC medicines in a given year would seek other, likely more expensive, treatment elsewhere if OTCs were not available.²



HEALTH LITERACY

Self-care offers educational opportunities on specific health issues (i.e. stop-smoking aids and products to treat heartburn).³

Pharmacists play a key role in guiding individuals through information leaflets on self-treatable conditions and self-care products from available sources.⁴ Studies have shown that self-care is a key practice in supporting healthcare systems to better prevent and manage NCDs which has gained worldwide prominence in public health discussions over the past few decades amongst other chronic diseases.⁵



COST EFFECTIVE

OTC medicines are affordable options for individuals,

86% of whom believe the use of OTC medicines helps lower their healthcare costs.⁶



ESSENTIALITY OF MEDICINES

e.g. OTC products are essential in

preventing and alleviating symptoms

for everyday health challenges, essential for basic first aid – there is no substitution for a variety of conditions.



PRODUCT CATEGORY BENEFITS

Individuals feel most confident self-treating:⁷



81%
Colds



73%
Blocked
nose



72%
Headache



69%
Coughs



65%
Sore
throat

75% of U.S. primary care physicians would recommend an OTC product prior to prescribing a medicine to relieve their patients' symptoms for ailments such as allergies, pain, cough and cold, and acid reflux/upset stomach.⁸

OTC categories such as Medicated Skin, Sleep and Antifungals deliver

outsized savings

(>\$15 per \$ spent).⁹



ANALGESICS



In people with migraines, the initiation of OTC analgesics treatment within 1 hour of pain onset results in a significantly **shorter duration of pain** than initiation of treatment more than 1 hour after pain onset.¹⁰

NICOTINE REPLACEMENT PRODUCTS

Smoking remains the leading cause of **preventable death and disease globally.**¹¹

WHO recommends the use of **proven tobacco cessation medications**

for individuals with high nicotine dependence.¹⁴



Nicotine Replacement Therapy, which come in the form of patches and gums, can increase quit success by **6%** - more than double the absolute quit rate.¹⁶

OTC cessation tools reduce craving and withdrawal symptoms



by providing a low, controlled dose of nicotine without the toxins found in cigarettes.¹⁵

Smoking Cessation Therapies plus behavioural support delivered, either through face to face counselling or telephone-based support is well studied and is **proven to improve quit outcomes by 3-5 times.**^{12 13}



COLD, COUGH, FLU

Using OTC medicines to treat common upper respiratory infections could save

\$4.75 billion a year.¹⁷

Early treatment may **reduce the duration of the flu as well as complication risks.**¹⁹

The use of medicines not only aids in restoring normal nasal function, but may also help

prevent secondary complications.¹⁸



ANTIACIDS

In 2009, a study in the US showed that switching heartburn therapies to OTC saved patients an average of

\$174 in office visits and medication costs each year.²⁰



A 2008, a study of heartburn sufferers estimated that if OTC medications were not available, there would be an annual increase of approximately

6 million heartburn-related doctor office visits.²¹

ORAL HEALTH

Including mouthwash in an individual's oral care daily routine is clinically proven to be **five times more effective** than floss at reducing dental plaque, to severe gum disease.²²



SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



Self-screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs): Encouraging regular STI testing through self-collection of samples (e.g., urine, vaginal swabs) for laboratory testing or use of at-home STI testing kits, allowing individuals to

monitor their sexual health status and seek appropriate treatment if necessary.²³

Benefiting societies



Across the globe, **1.8 billion** physician hours are saved through current self-care practices which allows HCPs to focus on more critical conditions and **unburdens health systems.**²⁴



By 2030, approximately

12 billion

OTC packs will be consumed in response to increased self-care practices instead of unnecessary physician visits. This will generate about

\$180 billion

in cost containment effects, as well as savings of up to

3 billion

hours of physician time.²⁵



The number of **people without access to medicines remains between**

1.3 and 2.1 billion people.

Societies without access to medicines and pharmacies rely heavily on the existence of OTC drugs that can be found in local stores.²⁶



 **10 million**

more health workers will be needed in low and middle income countries by 2030.²⁸

Self-care provides an optimal solution to rationalize this expected growth, equipping individuals to

manage routine conditions autonomously.



If self-care was not available, about

20,000 more physicians



would be required in Europe or, alternatively, each physician would have to work

2.4 hours longer per day.²⁷



Caring for the planet



The **GSCF Charter for Environmentally Sustainable Self-Care**

is a first global commitment on behalf of the consumer health-care industry to support environmental sustainability, without compromising on health outcomes, product safety and access to consumers.



Charter for **Environmentally Sustainable Self-Care**



The consumer health industry will lead the way on environmental sustainability by addressing the three pillars of the Charter:





The self-care industry supports

evidence-based policies and regulations

that drive the recycling of product packaging and the use of recycled plastics in the manufacturing of new product packaging, while safeguarding product safety and quality.



Delivering information to consumers through e-labelling has several advantages

for both consumers and health systems and helps limit paper waste and reduce CO² emissions per piece, given more boxes can be transported at once.²⁹ This is particularly important given the fact that, as of 2022, OTC market volumes stood at more than 60 billion units, compared to 57 billion in 2019.³⁰



GSCF is dedicated to a world where self-care provides individuals, families, and communities with the ability to manage their health and prevent diseases with or without the support of a health-care provider.

Successful self-care provides individuals with greater choice of healthcare options and more accessible entries to care – e.g., through pharmacies; greater value for care when treating ailments and chronic conditions; and can lead to long-term better health outcomes. It also can decrease the burden on healthcare systems and professional medical personnel; increase freedom for innovation in healthcare; and make progress toward universal health coverage.

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