Diffusion of new drugs: a review on the available empirical evidence focused on developing countries

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Abstract

This article's objective is to revise the available empirical evidence on the variables that affect the diffusion of new drugs, especially in developing countries. In that sense, the results will be highlighted as well as the methodological procedures used by the referred authors. In order to proceed the investigation, a review was made to describe the scientific literature available at CAPES, ECONPAPERS, Google Scholar, ISI Web of Knowledge, NBER and SciELO databases, through a simplified research by indexing search words on the title, abstract or key-words (Adoption; Diffusion; New Drugs; New Pharmaceuticals; Developing Countries; Pharmaceutical Industry; and their analogous in Portuguese and in Spanish). In general, such literature can be considered very scarce. That fact is more evident in case of developing countries. In these ones, the evidence is limited to only two of the most commonly related factors to the diffusion of pharmaceutical novelties: intellectual property rights and pharmaceutical market characteristics. Besides those two, the most frequent factors associated to the diffusion (mentioned mainly from studies that dealt with developed countries) were: patients' socioeconomic status and education level, network effects of information, health insurance-plan characteristics, patient's disease severity, physician's prescription, and regulatory environment. It was found that the papers reviewed presented a diversity of objectives and methodological procedures, although they were generally based on the mainstream of economic thought. Such diversity did not allow the direct comparison of the different texts herein studied. Their findings are limited to the particular characteristics of their study object. Therefore, they are not subject to extrapolations or generalizations to other contexts or dominium – as for the diffusion in other pharmaceutical markets, drugs, or specific therapeutic classes, although it remains a controversial issue to some authors

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