

Introduction

- Pharmacists are among the most accessible healthcare providers (HCPs); US patients visit a community pharmacy nearly twice as often as they visit their physician¹
- Acute pain is a common driver of care, with an estimated 80.2 million US adults treated with a prescription for acute pain and likely many more managing acute pain with over-the-counter (OTC) analgesics²
- Clinical guidelines emphasize nonopioid analgesics, and OTC medications such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, aspirin, and naproxen sodium were reported among the most commonly used agents in the US³⁻⁶
- To our knowledge, pharmacists' recommendations and consultation behaviors specific to OTC pain medications have not been previously assessed

Objectives

- To characterize US pharmacists' recommendations and counseling practices for OTC pain medications, including commonly recommended agents, factors influencing decision-making, and perceived patient barriers
- To identify opportunities for product improvement in the OTC pain category, including desired product attributes and educational resources that may enhance evidence-based counseling in community pharmacy settings

Methods

Study Design

- Cross-sectional, web-based survey of US retail/community pharmacists using the Sermo HCP research platform (>1.3 million HCPs across 150 countries)⁷
- The survey was fielded from February 17-18, 2026

Study Population

- The survey was conducted among pharmacists who practice in a US retail/community pharmacy and currently counsel patients on OTC medications

Survey Questionnaire

- The survey questionnaire covered four domains:
 - Practice profile and demographics
 - Patient pain occasions and OTC vs prescription perceptions
 - Recommendation behaviors and key decision-making factors
 - Educational resource needs
- Response formats included multiple-choice, Likert scale, multiselect, and percentage-based items
- All responses were anonymous

Statistical Analysis

- Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the survey results

Results

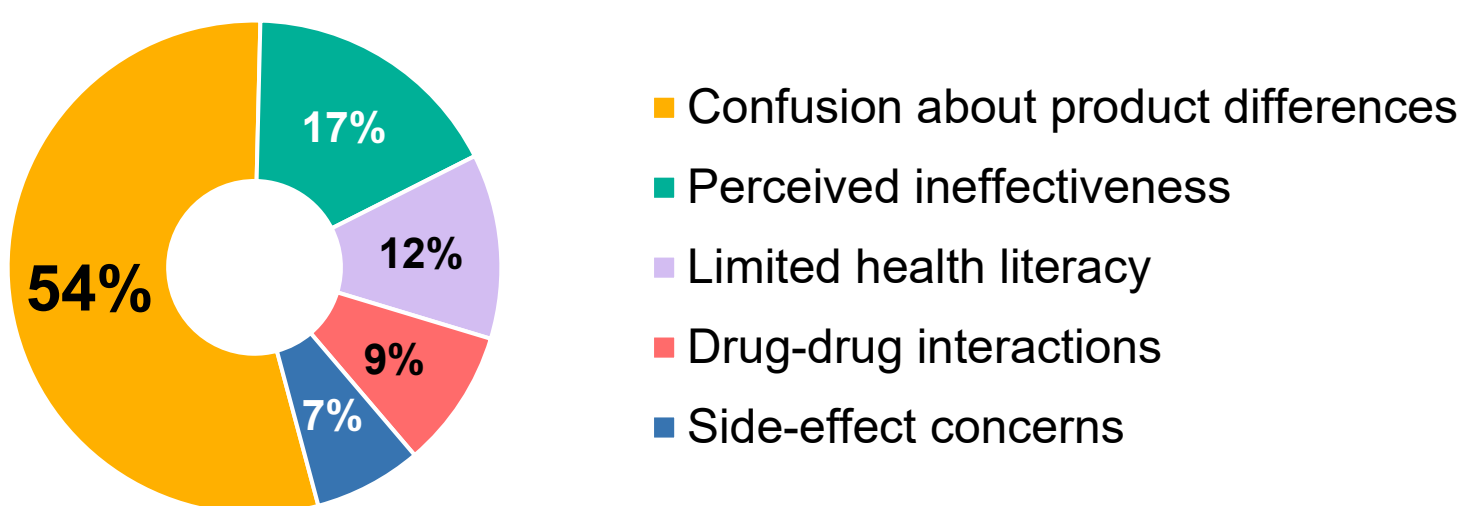
Practice Profile and Demographics

- A total of 201 US retail pharmacists were surveyed; most participating pharmacists practiced in chain community pharmacies (53%) and suburban settings (51%)
- A majority had >10 years of experience (58%) and about half counseled >50 patients weekly on OTC products (51%)

~45% of weekly counseling involved OTC pain medications

Patient Pain Occasions and Needs

Top Patient Barriers to OTC Selection*



- Nearly three-quarters of pharmacists believed that patients perceive OTC pain relievers as less effective than prescription options
- Older adults (65+) were the most common group seeking pain management advice (54%), followed by adults aged 40-64 (42%)

Top three pain conditions prompting OTC recommendations

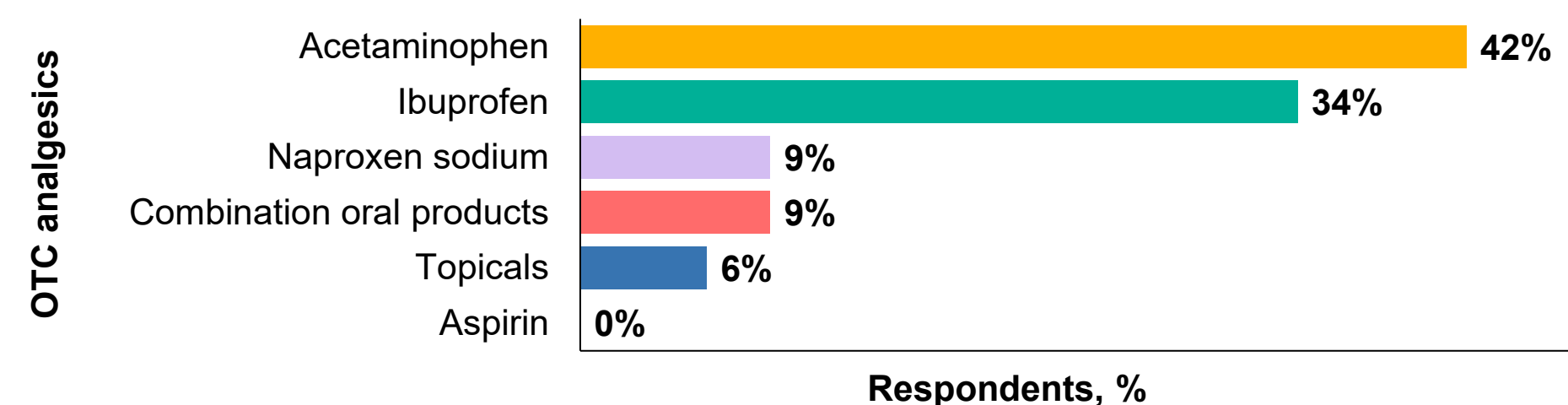
Headache (80%)

Arthritis pain (68%)

Backache (59%)

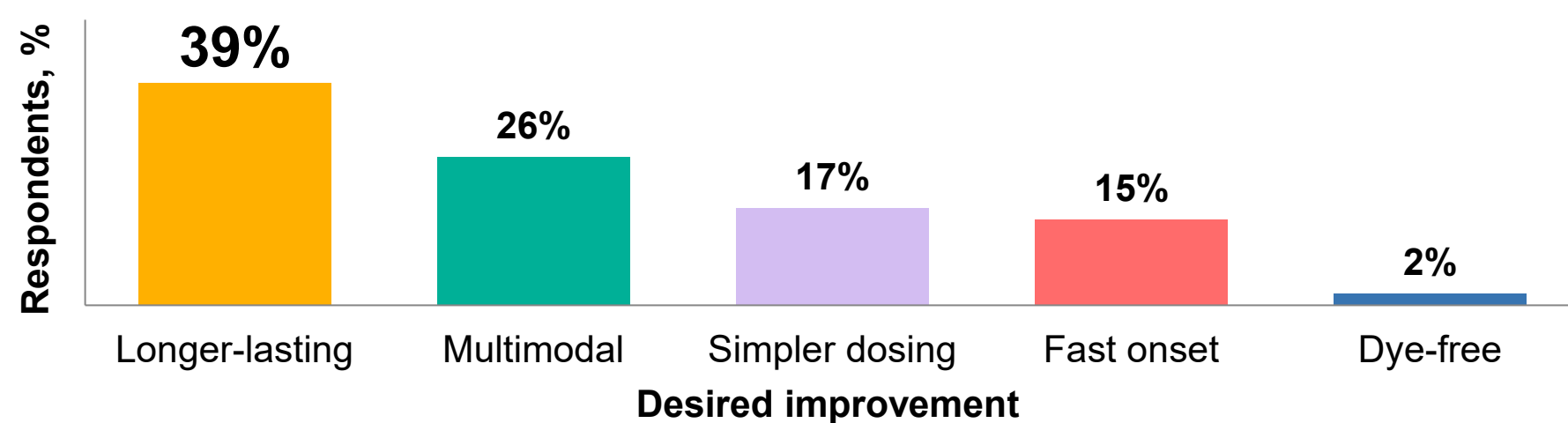
Pharmacists' Recommendation Behaviors

Most Recommended OTC Analgesics



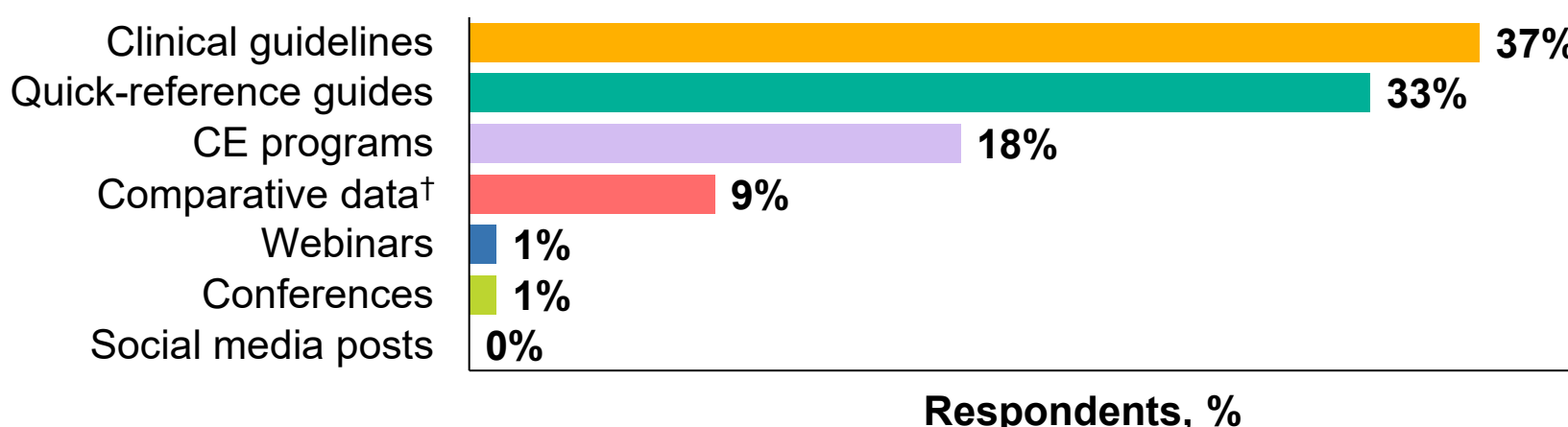
- Acetaminophen (42%) and ibuprofen (34%) were the most recommended OTC pain relievers
- Most responding pharmacists recommended analgesics by active ingredient (71%), driven mainly by cost and affordability (40%)
- Patient comorbidities (79%), concomitant medications (65%), and drug safety profile (38%) most influenced recommendations

Most Desired Product Improvements*



Educational Needs

Most Helpful Counseling Resources*



*Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding; †Comparative effectiveness data vs opioids. CE, continuing education.

70% preferred clinical guidelines or quick-reference guides to support OTC pain counseling

- Clinical guidelines (37%) and quick-reference guides (33%) were rated as the most helpful counseling resources
- Continuing education programs (18%) and comparative effectiveness data vs opioids (9%) rounded out the top requests

Conclusions

- ✓ This national survey highlights the important role that pharmacists play in OTC pain management, with pain-related counseling accounting for a significant portion of routine patient interactions
- ✓ Pharmacists report that patient confusion about product differences and perceived limited effectiveness remain barriers when patients self-select OTC pain relievers
- ✓ Acetaminophen and ibuprofen are the OTC analgesics most commonly recommended by pharmacists
- ✓ Recommendations are most influenced by patient comorbidities, concomitant medications, and safety
- ✓ An unmet need remains for OTC pain management options that provide longer-lasting relief, multimodal action, and simpler dosing
- ✓ Equipping pharmacists with clear clinical guidance, quick-reference tools, and evidence-based resources could enhance counseling and support patient self-management

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Disclosures

M. Eppel, J. Gleason, J. Homola, and K. Wagner are employees of Kenvue Brands LLC. **M. Jo** was a Saint Joseph's University fellow, not a Kenvue employee, who worked with Kenvue during survey development and deployment.

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