

# Study on Doctor Shopping Behavior: Insight from Patients with Upper Respiratory Tract Infection in Taiwan

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## Abstract

**Objectives:** Based on the actual medical records of ambulatory care visits, this study analyzed patients' healthcare seeking behavior and doctor shopping behavior (DSB), and investigated the underlying factors and the impact on the depletion of the healthcare resources for health policy makers to build a better health delivery system.

**Methods:** Among a cohort comprised of 200,000 patients randomly chosen from the National Health Insurance Research Database of Taiwan in 2004, only the patients seeking ambulatory

care visits for upper respiratory tract infection (URI) were analyzed.

**Results:** Among the 45,951 URI patients, 2875 of them exhibited DSB (prevalence 6.3%). The

DSB showed a reverse U-shaped relationship with the patient age (the highest DSB in age

18-34 years). The episodes of the URI had a negative impact on the DSB.

The odds ratios of

gender and the frequency of consultation versus DSB were 1.10 and 4.72, respectively, and

the depletion of days of medication and repeat prescription increased with doctor shopping.

**Conclusions:** Health education to raise DSB awareness is necessary, especially for female's

age 18-34 years. Implementing a proper referral system with efficient data exchange, setting

up control parameters in the IC cards, and strengthening the integrated

care plan could

reduce the unnecessary waste of the healthcare resources.

Keyword : Health care seeking behavior, Upper respiratory tract infections, Health resources, Referral and consultation, Delivery of health care