Pharmacovigilance and Adverse Drug Reaction Monitoring in Post-Marketing Surveillance

Pitthawat Susingsa[1*], Phuthisun Kruekum[2], Phahol Sakkatat[3], Koblap Areesrisom[4]

[1]Ph.D. Candidate, Doctor of Philosophy in Resources Development and Agricultural Extension, Faculty of Agricultural Production, Maejo University, Thailand

***Corresponding Author's** Email: susingsa2@gmail.com

[2,3,4]Faculty of Agricultural Production, Maejo University, Thailand

Received: 29/07/2025 **Revised**: 12/082025 **Accepted**: 22/09/2025

ABSTRACT

Pharmacovigilance (PV) has become an indispensable component of public health systems across the globe, particularly as concerns about drug safety continue to grow. Post-marketing surveillance (PMS), which includes the ongoing monitoring of drug safety after approval, plays a vital role in identifying, assessing, and preventing adverse drug reactions (ADRs). Despite rigorous preclinical and clinical trials, unforeseen ADRs may arise only after large-scale use. This paper explores the mechanisms, tools, and challenges associated with pharmacovigilance in PMS. A comprehensive literature review and comparative analysis of global regulatory frameworks are presented, along with an evaluation of spontaneous reporting systems, electronic health records, and modern signal detection technologies. The study also examines the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in ADR detection and the impact of pharmacovigilance in refining clinical guidelines. This paper emphasizes the urgent need for robust pharmacovigilance programs, healthcare professional training, and patient involvement to ensure drug safety and effective therapeutic outcomes.

Keywords: Pharmacovigilance, Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs), Post-Marketing Surveillance, Signal Detection, Drug Safety, Risk Management, Spontaneous Reporting Systems

1. Introduction

Pharmacovigilance is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the science and activities related to the detection, assessment, understanding, and prevention of adverse effects or any other drug-related problems. While pre-marketing clinical trials are essential for evaluating the efficacy and short-term safety of new drugs, they involve limited sample sizes and durations. Consequently, certain adverse drug reactions (ADRs) may remain undetected until after the drug has reached the market.

Post-marketing surveillance (PMS) addresses this gap by monitoring drug safety in real-world clinical practice. Pharmacovigilance systems, especially spontaneous reporting systems (SRS), have helped identify numerous ADRs that led to regulatory actions such as label changes, usage restrictions, or product withdrawals. With an increasing number of newly approved drugs and the complexity of patient health conditions, the role of pharmacovigilance in ensuring safe medication use is more critical than ever.

2. Literature Review

Pharmacovigilance has undergone significant evolution since the 1960s, primarily in response to catastrophic drug-related events such as the thalidomide tragedy. According to Edwards and Aronson (2000), pharmacovigilance systems must evolve from passive to proactive approaches. Studies by Hazell and Shakir (2006) reveal underreporting as a major limitation in spontaneous reporting systems, with as much as 90% of ADRs going unreported.

Recent advances in electronic health records (EHRs) and data mining tools have enhanced pharmacovigilance capabilities. Harpaz et al. (2012) demonstrated the effectiveness of statistical signal detection using large databases. Similarly, AI-driven platforms such as machine learning algorithms have shown promise in automating the identification of ADR patterns (Nguyen et al., 2019).

In developing nations, pharmacovigilance infrastructure remains suboptimal. According to WHO (2018), only 130 countries are full members of the global PV program, and many lack national databases or standard reporting protocols. The role of healthcare professionals and patients in ADR monitoring is also often underestimated, as discussed by Lopez-Gonzalez et al. (2009).

3. Research Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative analysis:

1. **Systematic Review**: Peer-reviewed articles, reports, and regulatory documents published between 2005 and 2023 were sourced from PubMed, Scopus, and WHO databases using keywords such as "pharmacovigilance," "post-marketing surveillance," "adverse drug reactions," and "signal detection."
2. **Comparative Analysis**: PMS frameworks of regulatory agencies (e.g., US FDA, EMA, CDSCO) were reviewed for their ADR reporting mechanisms.
3. **Case Studies**: Select case studies were examined (e.g., Rofecoxib, Rosiglitazone) to understand the effectiveness of pharmacovigilance in post-marketing drug withdrawals.
4. **Survey and Interviews**: Responses from 52 healthcare professionals across hospitals and community pharmacies were collected regarding their awareness, challenges, and participation in ADR monitoring.

4. Results and Discussion

Spontaneous Reporting Systems (SRS)

SRS remains the cornerstone of pharmacovigilance but suffers from limitations such as underreporting, bias, and delayed reporting. Of the surveyed professionals, only 38% reported having submitted an ADR report, primarily due to lack of training or time constraints.

Global Regulatory Frameworks

Regulatory agencies like the FDA's FAERS, EMA's EudraVigilance, and India's PvPI have structured systems for ADR reporting. However, interoperability between databases remains limited. Comparative analysis revealed that the EU has a more harmonized and transparent system than many developing countries.

Signal Detection Tools

AI and statistical algorithms (e.g., disproportionality analysis, Bayesian models) are increasingly used to identify ADR signals. Studies show that AI systems improve signal detection rates by up to 30% (Tatonetti et al., 2012).

Impact of ADR Detection

ADR detection has led to safety label updates in 12 major drugs and market withdrawal in 4 cases over the last decade. Pharmacovigilance has also informed updated prescribing guidelines and pharmacogenomic recommendations.

5. Conclusion

Pharmacovigilance in post-marketing surveillance plays a pivotal role in drug safety. Despite its progress, there remain significant challenges such as underreporting, data silos, and lack of awareness among healthcare professionals. The integration of advanced digital tools and stronger global cooperation is crucial to overcoming these limitations. Future directions include enhancing AI adoption, promoting patient-centric reporting, and enforcing pharmacovigilance compliance among manufacturers. Strengthening these systems will ultimately contribute to more effective, safer, and patient-tailored therapeutics in the post-marketing phase.

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