



# Clicks and Clinics: Navigating the E-Health Maze

A Study on Online Medical Consumer  
Conundrums among Filipinos

**Cavite State University - Philippines**



# WHAT ARE HEALTH SCAMS?

- False or misleading information about health and medicine that is disseminated through various communication channels, frequently unintentionally, is referred to as health misinformation.
- Health misinformation can be disseminated through social media, websites, news outlets, word-of-mouth, and other means of communication.
- This false information can be presented in a variety of ways, such as rumors, exaggerated or unfounded claims about medical procedures, diseases, vaccines, dietary habits, and more.





# SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Many people in the Philippines looked for treatments online because they were more affordable and accessible, even before Covid-19 confined people to their homes and made them afraid to visit a doctor.

Poor people are often more vulnerable to fake or cheap health products for several interconnected reasons:

- Economic Constraints
- Limited Access to Quality Healthcare
- Desperation
- Lack of Health Education

## EXAMPLES

**KUYA DODZ**  
herbal products

**ANTI-ARTHRITIS**

Arthritis  
Gouty arthritis  
Rheumatoid arthritis  
All joints and nerve pains  
Control level of uric acid

40 Capsules 500mg  
NO APPROVED THERAPEUTIC CLAIM

**PRESTIGE**  
**ETHYL ALCOHOL**

70% with moisturizer

ANTISEPTIC | ANTIBACTERIAL

ANGEL'S BREATH SCENT

KILLS 99.9% OF GERMS!!

FDA 100% PURE FRESH & CLEAN

**DOC APO HEALING EYE DROPS**

NAWALA ANG PUGITA AT  
GLAUCOMA SA KANYANG  
MATA



# Statistics of health fraud in the Philippines

The Philippines experienced an explosion of false information about untried cosmetic products and quick fixes for chronic illnesses during the pandemic. The majority are displayed on **Facebook**, the most popular social media platform among the **76 million Internet users** in the Philippines, as free posts or paid advertisements.

More than 50% of the Philippine population is classified as poor. This limits their accessibility in numerous necessities, especially their medical needs. In a study conducted by Robredo et al. (2022), **the Philippines exhibits a high prevalence of self-medication, ranging from 31% to 66%**. Self-medication can serve as a form of healthcare, particularly for low-income households who wish to avoid the costs associated with medical consultations and diagnostics, such as lost productivity due to lengthy clinic wait times. The practice of self-medication is common among individuals with higher income in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

## In a study conducted in Cavite State University,

- 46.3% of Students **STRONGLY AGREE** that medical care is difficult to seek in the Philippines, while 29.3% **AGREE** with the same statement.
- 41.8% of Students **OFTEN** see health related promotional content, while 28.4% of Students **ALWAYS** see the same content.
- 43.3% of Students **OFTEN** see health claims from content creators, while 19.4% of Students **ALWAYS** see the same content.
- 71.6% Have taken medications without proper consultation or prescription from a physician.
- 19.4% of Students have experienced adverse effects due to self-medication.
- More than half of the respondents cite Financial Restrictions (58.2%) and Abundance of Information in the Internet (53.7%) as the main reasons for their self-medication practices.



# Existing policies in the Philippines combating health fraud

## Burning and Confiscation of Products



Manila destroys fake medicine and beauty products



The Philippine Bureau of Customs (BOC) has destroyed about P3 billion worth of bogus beauty and personal care seized goods.

## [REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8203] AN ACT OF PROHIBITING COUNTERFEIT DRUGS, PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS

These Rules and Regulations regulate unregistered imported drug product without a registered counterpart brand in the Philippines. If the unregistered imported drug product has a registered counterpart brand in the Philippines, the product shall be considered counterfeit.



# Controlling the Practice

In the study of Shivastrava et al. (2022), the recommended measures to control the practice of self-medication include the **regulation of dispensing practice, enhancing healthcare service accessibility, and implementing an awareness program.**

- Reinforcement of the laws targeting health frauds that are concentrated in the internet.
- An agency that specializes in busting these practices in the internet should be established.
- Clinics and health centers should be established especially in remote areas where there are economically-disadvantaged populations.





# Countering the Root: Consumer Awareness is the Key

- Engage in social media trends to promote awareness. Use the root of the problem as an advantage to counter the practice. E.g. Creating TikTok videos and reels on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.
- Famous content creators can be also used as candidates to make contents and spread awareness regarding misinformation on certain trending health products. This may gain the consumers' attention more effectively.
- Schools, as powerful learning institutions shall take part in educating the youth through seminars, symposiums, and other possible means, molding them to become more responsible in consuming medicines available in the market.
- Tie in with news and radio stations, and newspaper outlets for greater audience reach.

