



Medicine & Therapeutics Reviews (MTR)

Letter to the Editor

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Injudicious Use of Antibiotic Eye Drops in Indian Saloons – A Public Health Concern

Dr. Indrani Devi Sarma, MD¹

¹ Pharmacology, AIIMS Guwahati, Guwahati, Assam,

Dear Editor,

I wish to draw attention to a concerning yet under-discussed practice prevalent in many saloons across India—the use of antibiotic eye drops, often administered by barbers after skincare procedures. This practice, though well-intentioned to soothe irritation or prevent redness, represents a serious breach of rational drug use principles and poses significant risks to public health. The use of antibiotic preparations without medical indication fosters unnecessary exposure to antimicrobial agents. Such indiscriminate application, typically without prescription or medical supervision, contributes to the development of antimicrobial resistance (AMR)—a crisis already recognized as one of the greatest threats to modern medicine. Furthermore, repeated and casual use of topical antibiotics increases the risk of allergic reactions, ocular surface disturbances, and delayed recognition of genuine ocular pathology. It is equally troubling that these interventions are carried out in non-clinical environments with limited awareness of hygiene standards. Saloons are not equipped to ensure sterile handling, thereby raising the potential for contamination and secondary infection. What is often perceived by clients as “preventive care” may, in reality, expose them to compounded risks. The impact of this practice goes beyond individual eye health. It perpetuates a culture of casual medicine where therapeutic agents are seen as quick fixes rather than carefully indicated interventions. Left unchecked, it may normalize the lay use of prescription-only medicines and undermine public confidence in evidence-based ophthalmic care. This issue calls for urgent

public health dialogue. Regulatory bodies, professional associations, and community health workers must work collaboratively to raise awareness, restrict the over-the-counter sale of antibiotic eye drops, and educate both salon professionals and the public about safer alternatives, such as the use of sterile lubricating drops or simple hygienic measures.

In an era where antimicrobial stewardship is paramount, such practices must be addressed with both regulatory oversight and community-level sensitization. The small but widespread misuse of eye drops in salons is not a trivial issue—it is a window into the everyday ways in which irrational drug use threatens collective health.

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Corresponding Author

Dr. Indrani Devi Sarma, MD, Pharmacology, AIIMS Guwahati, Guwahati, Assam

Email: i.sarma17@gmail.com