Reading: At the pharmacy

A dialogue between a pharmacist and a customer:

Pharmacist: Good morning. How can I help you today?

Customer: Hello. Can you fill a prescription?

Pharmacist: Certainly. I see that you need several items - let me check if we have them all. I will be right back.

Pharmacist: Well, Mr. Jones we have most of the items but I see that your doctor prescribed you brand name antibiotics and we only have the generic variety, will this be ok?

Mr. Jones: Um, what's the difference?

Pharmacist: The drugs are actually the same, both varieties use the same active ingredients and are taken in the same manner. The only real difference is the cost, the generic are much cheaper.

Mr. Jones: That sounds good. Oh, but what about side effects of the generic one?

Pharmacist: The side-effects are the same with both drugs; the most common one being drowsiness. Of course, you should read the instructions before taking and pay close attention to the contraindications as this drug has a few.

Mr. Jones: Ok, so I will take the generic antibiotics and what about the other items?

Pharmacist: We have the eye-drops, the anti-inflammation suppository and the liniment. I must say that this seems like an unusual combination of treatment.

Mr. Jones: Ah, well you see it is not just for me. The prescription is from our family doctor and covers me, my wife and our son.

Pharmacist: Now I see. Ok, so I just need to tell you a little about these drugs. May I ask who the liniment is for?

Mr. Jones: That's for me.

Pharmacist: Ok, well this is a transdermal liniment which means you need to apply it to the area and the active ingredient is absorbed into your bloodstream.

Mr. Jones: Ok, and it should only be applied to a small area of skin?

Pharmacist: Yes, that is correct. Just follow the instructions on that. Now, the eye-drops - these are topical...
Mr. Jones: You mean they may be unsafe?

Pharmacist: You would be surprised how often people try taking them orally.

Mr. Jones: I assure you that I know how to use eye-drops.

Pharmacist: Right, sorry I didn't mean to cause offense. Anyway, the suppositories are a little more unusual. Are these also for you?

Mr. Jones: Absolutely not. They are for my wife.

Pharmacist: Ok, well please tell her that she must follow the dosage instructions on the box and if at any time she starts to feel numb, she should discontinue the treatment.

Mr. Jones: Of course.

Pharmacist: So that's everything from the prescription. Is there anything else I can do for you?

Mr. Jones: Yes, I need something for a blocked nose and do you have anything to help the immune system cope better?

Pharmacist: There are several options for boosting the immune system but as you don't have a prescription it will have to be an over-the-counter remedy. I would recommend 'rescue remedy'

Mr. Jones: What is it?

Pharmacist: It is a tincture of alcohol and herbs.

Mr. Jones: So it is natural?

Pharmacist: Yes, and it is very good. I use it on my daughter during the flu season.

Mr. Jones: Ok, that sounds good.

Pharmacist: And for the blocked-nose, of course a nasal spray to clear the nose and maybe a vitamin C dietary supplement as well.

Mr. Jones: That would be good, but it's for my son and he cannot swallow tablets.

Pharmacist: No problem, these are effervescence tablets so they dissolve in water.

Mr. Jones: Perfect. How much will that be?

Pharmacist: 49.92 with tax.
Discussion Questions

How useful do you think natural remedies are in preventative medicine?

Should pharmacists be allowed to substitute generic drugs for brand drugs? Why / why not?

In your opinion, do people take too many over-the-counter drugs? Why / why not?