

Original Research Article

An Exploratory Study to Assess Prevalence and Pattern of Self-Medication Practices among Students of Rayat-Bahra College of Nursing, Mohali

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Self-care is a broad concept encompassing hygiene, nutrition, lifestyle, environmental factors, socioeconomic factors and self-medication. Self-medication is one of an element of self-care, not necessarily including the consumption of modern medicines but also herbs. Self-medication is the primary public health resource in the health care system and consists of the health activities and health related decisions of individuals, families, friends, colleagues at work and significant others.

In developing countries like India, self-medication is a common practice by medical and allied professionals and by people who cannot afford the high cost of clinical services as it is cost effective and less time consuming. The most common primary morbidities for seeking self-medication were identified as headache, common cold, cough, fever and abdominal pain; with analgesics, antibiotics and antipyretics as predominantly used drugs.

However, self-medication is far from being a completely safe practice, particularly in case of un-responsible self-medication and cause serious adverse reactions and the worst is antibiotic resistance among the patients taking medicines for chronic illnesses and development of more resistant strains of micro-organisms.

Materials & Methods: 100 students of BSN 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year and 4th year of RBCN, Mohali were selected by simple random sampling (lottery method) as per inclusion and exclusion criteria. The data was collected from subjects by a structured questionnaire, consisting of socio-demographic characteristics and questionnaire regarding self-medication practices.

Results: The study findings revealed that self-medication was prevalent among a maximum (73%) of subjects; in tablet/ capsule form by 86% of subjects and only during emergency condition by 44% of subjects. Headache/ Insomnia was identified as the most common cause by nearly half (47%) of subjects and the same experienced Nausea as the side-effect of self-medication drugs. The most widely used drug category was Analgesic/ Antipyretic by 73% of subjects. Further in categorization of drugs, 70% were taking Paracetamol among Analgesic/ Antipyretic; Amoxicillin as preferred Antibiotic by 45% of people for self-medication. The outcome of self-medication was reported as cure of illness up to some extent by more than one-third (37%) of subjects.

Conclusion: It was concluded that self-medication is prevalent among a maximum (73%) of subjects with Analgesic/ Antipyretic as most commonly used category of drug.

Key words: Prevalence, Pattern, Self-medication practices, Students.

INTRODUCTION

The desire for self-care is perhaps the key factor in practicing self-medication

which can be defined as obtaining and consuming drugs without the advice of the physician either for diagnosis, prognosis or

surveillance of treatment. Self-medication is the practice by which individuals treat their ailments and conditions without physician's consultation with medicines available without prescription. [1] Medicines for self-medication are considered as Over the Counter (OTC) and are available without physician's prescription through pharmacies. [2]

Self-medication practices can't be entirely considered as harmful. Responsible self-medication is one of the common components of self-care as considered by WHO. [3] The most common ailments for which people prefer practicing self-medication are identified as headache, followed by common cold, Dysmenorrhea along with others like loss of appetite, fatigue, insomnia, stress etc. [4] Various OTC drugs used are analgesics, ointments, tonics, vitamin supplements, nasal drops and many others.

In developing countries like India, self-medication is a common practice as it provides an economic alternative for people who cannot afford the high cost of clinical services and also as many drugs are dispensed 'Over The Counter' without prescription from a registered medical practitioner. Drug retail shops frequently serve as the public's first point of contact with the health care. In India, where universal access to health care is yet to be achieved, self-medication is the most common and preferred mode resorted by people. [5]

The practice of self-medication must be based on authentic medical information otherwise irrational use of drugs can cause wastage of resources, increased resistance of pathogens and can lead to serious health hazards such as adverse drug reactions and prolonged morbidity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted on hundred students of B.Sc. Nursing 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th year of RBCN, Mohali selected

by simple random sampling (lottery method) as per inclusion and exclusion criteria.

- The subjects were informed about the purpose and objectives of the study.
- A verbal screening tool was applied to exclude the students suffering from any chronic disease or taking any prescription medicine.
- Study sample (100 BSN students) was collected by simple random sampling (lottery method).
- An informed verbal consent was taken from study subjects after assuring the confidentiality of information collected.
- Data was collected from sample regarding socio-demographic characteristics and self-medication practices by administering self-structured questionnaire.

Exclusion criteria:

- Students suffering from some chronic disease.
- Students taking any prescription medicine.

Data processing and Analysis: The data collected was analyzed by various statistical measures including frequency and percentage distribution and was presented in the form of tables and figures.

RESULTS

Analysis and interpretation of data were organised under the following headings:

Part 1- Data related to socio-demographic variables.

Part 2- It includes data related to prevalence of self-medication practices.

Part 3- Data related to factors responsible for self-medication practices.

Part 4- It explains about pattern of self-medication practices.

Table 1: Prevalence of Self-Medication Practices N=100

<i>Prevalence of self-medication</i>	<i>f (%)</i>
Everyday	08 (08.0)
Occasionally	10 (10.0)
Acute conditions	44(44.0)
When ever needed	38 (38.0)

Table 2: Sources of consultation for self-medication N=100

Sources of consultation	f (%)
Self	43 (43.0)
Friends/ Relatives/ Neighbors	31 (31.0)
Mass-Media	17 (17.0)
Traditional practitioners/ healers	04 (04.0)
Health personnel	04 (04.0)
Others	01(01.0)

Table 3: Category of drug usage as per years of professional qualification N=100

Category	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year
Analgesics/ Antipyretic	30	05	16	22
Antibiotics	03	01	05	03
Anti-allergic	00	06	03	00
Vitamin Supplements	06	00	00	00

Table 4: Causes of self-medication practices N=100

Causes of self-medication	f (%)
Headache/ Insomnia	47 (47.0)
Fever/ Infection	30 (30.0)
Common cold/ Hypersensitivity	11 (11.0)
Dysmenorrhea	10 (10.0)
Others	02 (02.0)

Table 5: Reason for resorting to self-medication/ self-diagnosis. N=100

Reason for self-medication	f (%)
Lack of time and cost effective	14 (14.0)
Acute illness.	20 (20.0)
Emergency use.	44 (44.0)
Prior experience to the drug.	22 (22.0)

Table 6: Category of drug used for self-medication N=100

Category of drug	f (%)
Antibiotics	12 (12.0)
Analgesics/Antipyretics	73 (73.0)
Anti-allergic	09 (09.0)
Vitamin supplements	06 (06.0)

Table 7: Frequency distribution showing side-effects of self-medication drugs N=100

Side-effects	f (%)
Nausea	47(47.0)
Headache/Restlessness	26(26.0)
Irritation/ Frustration	12(12.0)
Itching	04(04.0)
Palpitations/Sweating	08(08.0)
Others	03(03.0)

Table 8: Outcome of self-medication practices N=100

Outcome of Medicine	f (%)
Cured illness	34 (34.0)
Cured up to some extent	37 (37.0)
Prevented illness	08 (08.0)
Relief from symptom	21 (21.0)

DISCUSSION

In the present study, it was found that maximum (73%) of subjects practiced self-medication occasionally, with 44% taking medication only in acute conditions. 43% of the subjects taking medication by their own and nearly one third (31%) consulting their friends/ family

members/ neighbors, 44% of the subjects reported only emergency condition as reason for resorting to it.

Nearly half (47%) reported headache/insomnia as the major cause of self-medication with maximum (73%) of subjects taking analgesics/ antipyretics and only 6% taking vitamin-supplements.

The present study revealed that maximum (70%) of subjects preferred using Paracetamol as analgesic/antipyretic and nearly half (45%) were taking amoxicillin as commonly used antibiotic. About (47%) of the subjects experienced nausea as the common side-effect of drugs with 37% reported cure of cause of illness up to some extent with self-medication drugs.

Jain, Singla (2013) conducted a statistical study on self-medication pattern on 60 communities of Haryana and found that the most frequently self diagnosed illnesses or symptoms of illnesses were: GI illnesses and headache / fever. The reasons given by respondents for self-diagnosis and self-medication were non seriousness of the illnesses, for emergency use and prior experience about the illness. [6] Similar to this, the present study also found Headache/ Insomnia & Fever as the most common cause for self-medication. Emergency conditions, prior experience to drug, acute nature of illness, lack of time and cost effectiveness were identified as reasons for resorting to self-medication/ self-diagnosis.

In the present study the category of drug for self-medication data revealed Analgesic/ Antipyretic as most commonly used drugs followed by Antibiotics, Anti-allergic and Vitamin supplements in tablet/capsule form, whereas in study conducted by M Patel, Udayshankar Singh (2013) among 100 students of 3rd semester engineering ADIT College in Vidhyanagar, Gujarat, it was found that self-medication is very common among engineering students with pain killers,

cough remedies and topical creams as commonly used drugs. [7]

Worku Solomon, Mariam G Abebe (2000) conducted a study on 352 households in Jimma town to find practice of self-medication and found that a significant number of people used medicines by own and the major reason was its relatively lower cost. [8] In contrary, the present study a maximum (73%) were practicing self-medication and emergency conditions and acute illnesses as the major reason for resorting to self-medication/ self-diagnosis.

CONCLUSION

The present study considered the following assumptions-

- People prefer taking self-medication rather than physician's prescription medication.
- People practice self-medication most commonly for Headache/ Insomnia.
- Self-medication is practiced mainly due to lack of time and money.

It was concluded from the study that self-medication is prevalent among a maximum (73%) of subjects and 44% practiced only during emergency condition. It also revealed Headache/ Insomnia as the most common cause answered by 47% of subjects. Analgesic/ Antipyretic were the drug of choice by 73% of the subjects with 70% subjects taking Paracetamol as preferred Analgesic/ Antipyretic.

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