

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Assessment of pattern of self- medication among general population

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ABSTRACT

Background:Self-medication includes the usage of therapeutic products by people to treat self-recognized indications. The present study was conducted to assess pattern of self- medication among general population.

Materials & Methods:238 subjects of both genders were included. The questionnaire was prepared which comprised of information such as knowledge, and attitude regarding OTC drugs, pattern of use of OTC drugs, factors affecting their use, commonly used drugs for self- medication

Results: Out of 238 subjects, males were 128 and females were 110. Common symptom for self-medication was joint pain in 35%, fever in 15%, common cold in 6%, headache in 4%, allergy in 8%, diarrhea in 12% and sore throat in 20%. The difference was significant (P< 0.05). The preferred therapy for self-medication was homoeopathy in 28%, allopathy in 54%, herbal in 8%, home remedies in 4% and combination therapy in 6%. The difference was significant (P< 0.05).

Conclusion: The most common symptoms for self- medication was joint pain and preferred therapy was allopathy.

Key words: Self- medication, joint pain, Homoeopathy

Introduction

Self-medication includes the usage of therapeutic products by people to treat self-recognized illnesses/indications. It also denotes the intermittent/constant use of a medication prescribed by a physician for lasting or repeated illnesses/indications.¹ Self- medication includes obtaining medicines without a prescription; resubmitting old prescriptions to secure new ones; sharing medicines with friends, family members/relatives; or consuming remaining medicines kept at home.²

The practice of self-medication and the irrational use of drugs is a major public health concern. The concept of self-medication involves the use of medicines for curative purposes but without professional advice.³ It is an act of obtaining and consuming drugs without the advice of a health worker. Inappropriate use of self-medication can increase “drug-induced illness”, death There are various factors that contribute for self-medication such as urge of self-care, feeling of sympathy toward family members in sickness, poverty, ignorance, misbeliefs, extensive advertisement, availability of drugs other than in pharmacy, and lack of easy access to professional health-care services.⁴

There is always a risk of interaction between active ingredients of OTC drugs and prescription medicines, which may worsen the existing disease pathology or create new ones. Analgesics, antipyretics, anti-inflammatory agents, drugs for cough and cold are amongst the commonly practiced self-medications.⁵ The present study was conducted to assess pattern of self- medication among general population.

Materials & Methods

The present study comprised of 238subjects of both genders.

They included patients as well as their attendants attending OPD and wards.

The written consent was obtained from all subjects.

Data such as name, age, gender etc. was recorded. The questionnaire was prepared which comprised of information such as knowledge and attitude regarding OTC drugs, pattern of use of OTC drugs, factors affecting their use, commonly used drugs for self- medication. Data thus obtained was assessed statistically. P value less than 0.05 was considered significant.

Results

Table I Distribution of subjects

Total- 238		
Gender	Males	Females
Number	128	110

Table I shows that out of 238 subjects, males were 128 and females were 110.

Table II Symptoms for self-medication

Symptoms	Percentage	P value
Joint pain	35%	0.01
Fever	15%	
Common cold	6%	
Headache	4%	
Allergy	8%	
Diarrhea	12%	
Sore throat	20%	

Table II, graph I shows that common symptoms for self- medication was joint pain in 35%, fever in 15%, common cold in 6%, headache in 4%, allergy in 8%, diarrhea in 12% and sore throat in 20%. The difference was significant (P< 0.05).

Graph I Symptoms for self-medication

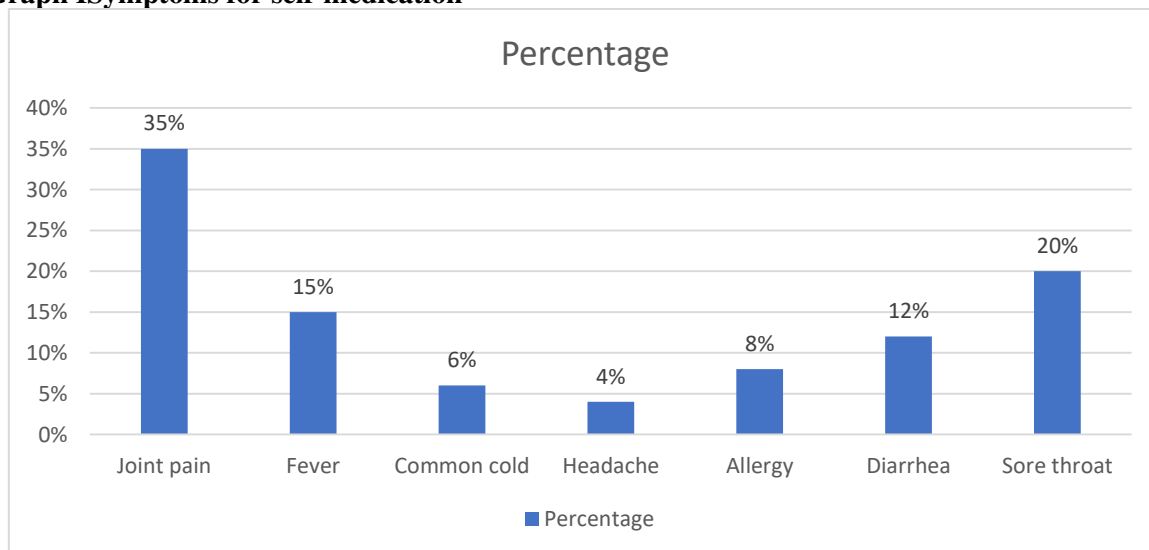


Table III Preferred therapy for self-medication

Therapy	Percentage	P value
Homoeopathy	28%	0.01
Allopathy	54%	
Herbal	8%	
Home remedies	4%	
Combination	6%	

Table III shows that preferred therapy for self-medication was homoeopathy in 28%, allopathy in 54%, herbal in 8%, home remedies in 4% and combination therapy in 6%. The difference was significant ($P < 0.05$).

Discussion

Self-medication is the most common form of self-care which is becoming increasingly significant in many countries. Self-medication is the selection and use of medicines by individuals to treat self-recognized illnesses or symptoms.⁶ Responsible self-medication requires that an individual treat their ailments and conditions with medicines that are approved and available without prescription, and which are safe and effective when used as directed.⁷ Drug utilization in children is of great concern worldwide. Many drugs for this group of population are used in outpatient settings. Parents generally give drugs to treat their child sickness.⁸ The trend of using drugs on their own that is self-medication has been increasing in developing countries as well as in developed countries in recent years. Drugs use without consulting any physician or health care provider for treating or preventing the ailments is self-medication.⁹ Risk of drug dependency and abuse are also associated with self-medication. Others may also include inadequate dosage, excessive or prolonged drug use and double medication as individuals could not be able to identify that same drug has already been taken with another brand name which may lead to serious consequences.¹⁰ Unjustified and absurd self-medication consequence is the wastage of healthcare resources and may also lead to hospital admissions.¹¹ The present study was conducted to assess pattern of self-medication among general population.

We found that out of 238 subjects, males were 128 and females were 110. Sridhar et al¹² assessed the nature, reasons, and consequences of self-medication practice among the general population. The prevalence of self-medication practices among our study respondents was 52.1%. Headache (155 [37.5%]) was the most common clinical condition treated through self-medication practice. Familiarity with the treatment/medication (198 [48%]) was the most common cited reasons, whereas the advertisement and friend's advice were the most (182 [44%]) cited sources of information for self-medication usage. The majority (265 [64.1%]) of the respondents considered self-medication practice as safe. However, 19 respondents reported side-effects or complications during the due course of self-medication. It was observed that there is a statistically significant association ($P < 0.05$) between age and employment status of this study participants with self-medication practices.

We observed that common symptoms for self-medication was joint pain in 35%, fever in 15%, common cold in 6%, headache in 4%, allergy in 8%, diarrhea in 12% and sore throat in 20%.

Nagarajaiah BH et al¹³ assessed the prevalence, pattern, and reasons for self-medication practices among population. Of the 5,489 respondents, 4,316 (78.63%) reported self-medication within a 6-month recall period. Of these respondents, Mandya reported high self-medication practices (81.86%) when compared with Bangaloreans (72.39%). The difference was significant. Among the different age groups, high self-medication was seen in 41–60 years age group (40.48%) and low among those aged 4–60 years (29.37%). The difference was significant. Self-medication was high in male (82.76%) than female subjects (72.87%). Self-medication was slightly more in rural population (79.05%) than urban respondents (78.20%). The most common conditions/symptoms for which self-medication was done was for gastric symptoms (72.10%), followed by joint pains (65.89%), headache (63.02%), fever (47.87%), and common cold (37.95%). The difference was statistically significant, with P value < 0.001 . Self-medication was significantly more in rural owing to non-availability of doctors (62.01%) when compared with urban residents (38.14%). Self-medication was time-saving and, for minor illnesses, was also more in rural (64.99% and 73.78%, respectively) when compared with urban (58.82% and 68.76%, respectively) residents. The most important source of drug information for self-medication was family members and relatives (32.30%).

Gohar et al¹⁴ in their study 400 parents were randomly selected and interviewed. It was observed that self-medication prevalence in children by their parents was 77.25% with male and female ratio 49% and 51%. Self-medication awareness was 66% among total parents and this practice was more in children of age 1–5 years i.e., 47%. Most common conditions for self-medication were fever, cough, flu, vomiting, diarrhoea and allergies. Frequently used drug groups include antipyretics, cough and cold preparation, antimicrobials, antiemetics and antiallergy. It was also observed that 45% of parents practiced self-medication 3–4 times per year and the main reasons behind this practice were perception of illness, previous experience, lack of time, financial constraint and leftover medicines.

Old prescriptions, family members, friends and medical stores were common source of self-medication. This study also revealed that 57% of parents reported recovery after self-medication. It was also observed that 63% of parents informed physician about self-medication in their children and 18% reported that their child became sicker after self-medication. Out of total 56% participants were agreed that self-medication is unsafe for their children.

Conclusion

Authors found that most common symptoms for self-medication was joint pain and preferred therapy was allopathy.

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