



Original Research Article

A Study on Knowledge, Attitude and Practice about Self Medication among College Students

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Received: 30/05/2014

Revised: 19/06/2014

Accepted: 23/06/2014

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Self-medication is defined as obtaining and consuming drugs without the advice of a physician either for diagnosis, prescription or surveillance of treatment. Self-medication is widely practiced due to easy availability of over the counter drugs. Improper usage of self-medication can lead to wasteful expenditure, increase in morbidities due to adverse events and resistance to antibiotics.

OBJECTIVES: 1) To assess the knowledge, attitude and practice about self-medication among college students. **MATERIAL AND METHODS:** A cross sectional study was done on final year B.A and B.Sc. students of BLDEA's S.B Arts and K.C.P Science College during August -September 2013. The data was collected using semi-structured questionnaire. **RESULTS:** Out of total 167 students participated in the study, 81(48.5%) were male and 86(51.5%) were females. Around 157 (94.01%) of students practiced self-medication. Time saving 55 (35.03%), to get some relief 37 (23.56%) & not interested to spend good amount for minor illnesses (like fever, common cold & cough) 104 (66.24%) were main reasons for taking self-medication. Anti-pyretic 120 (76.43%) was the most commonly used drug for self-medication. Main indication for taking self-medication were fever 92 (58.59%), cough/cold/sore throat 77(49.04%). Books (66.87%) were the major source of knowledge regarding self-medication. 116 (69.46%) of students were aware of the fact that taking self-medication is harmful. **CONCLUSION:** Practice of self-medication was highly prevalent among the students. Attitude of the students towards self-medication was positive. It should be emphasized that we must create awareness about appropriate use of self-medication and the adverse drug reaction arising from self-medication.

Key words: Self-Medication, College Students, Over the counter drugs, Antipyretics.

INTRODUCTION

According to WHO, self-medication is defined as obtaining and consuming drugs without the advice of a physician either for diagnosis, prescription or surveillance of treatment. ⁽¹⁾ Self-medication is helpful if used in proper way with proper knowledge about the drugs. ⁽²⁾ It is economically feasible when there are less resources with

the patient. Self-medication provides confidence of relying on oneself to treat minor illnesses when there is lack of accessibility to a doctor due to various reasons. But self-medication has its own demerits such as improper medication and inadequate dosage of the drug. Self-medication may cause adverse drug reactions due to over dosage & may lead to

rise of drug resistance among microbes. Self-medication can also lead to drug addiction; example is the use of pain killers by people in the geriatric age group. Self-medication is widely prevalent throughout the World and in India. There are several reasons for favoring self-medication like lack of accessibility and availability of doctors in India as evidenced by doctor to patient ratio of 1:1700 against WHO recommended 1:1000, ratio is more worse in rural areas. ⁽³⁾ Another reason is economic loss to the person, noted by the average time spent at the hospital of 4-5 hrs. leading to apparent loss in that day's earning and in addition to expense incurred by the person towards hospital and travelling charges. Due to easy availability of over the counter drugs and lack of regulation towards the selling of drugs combined with above stated reasons people prefer taking self-medication. Self-medication is prevalent in college students, because of lack of time to go the hospital due to their busy schedule or impatience towards going for the consultation and free access to over the counter drugs. There is paucity of studies conducted about the assessment of self-medication among college students, so this study was taken up with aim of assessment of knowledge, attitude and practice of self-medication among college students.

Objectives:

To assess the knowledge, attitude and practice about self-medication among college students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional study was done on final year students of S B Arts and K.C.P Science College, Bijapur in August to September 2013 after obtaining prior permission from concerned authorities. A briefing was given about the aims and objectives of study and the students who

gave consent were included in the study. Out of 325 final year students, 167 participated in the study enrolled in the study. Data was collected through semi-structured questionnaire. Results are presented in the form of proportions, percentages.

RESULTS

Out of 167 students participated in the study, 81(48.5%) were male and 86(51.5%) were females. Mean age of the students was 20.5(±1.12) years. 94.01 % (157) of the students were practicing self-medication. Most common reasons favoring self-medication were that Minor Illnesses (104,66.24%) can be managed by themselves followed by, time saving (55, 35.03%) and economical (37,23.56%)(table1). Fever (92, 58.59%) was the most common indication for taking drugs without advice followed by cough/cold/ cough(77,49.04%), Headache/ Body ache (75,47.77%)(figure1). Commonly used drugs are Anti-pyretic(120, 76.43%) followed by Anti-histaminics (64,40.76%) and Analgesics (59, 37.57%) respectively (fig. 2). Doctor's previous prescription 105(66.87%) was the most common source of information for the participants for self-medicating, followed by advice by Pharmacists and Friends which were 78 (49.68%) and 67 (40.11%) respectively (table2).

In our study we found that 87.26% of the students were unaware about the dose, time of administration (before food or after food) and duration of treatment. 90.5% of the respondents were unaware about the side effects of the drugs they are taking. Majority of the students (69.46%) said that they know self-medication is harmful. Students felt that the main harmful effects of self-medication were risk of adverse drug reactions (93,55.65%) followed by ineffective treatment (38, 22.75%).

Table 1: Reason for practicing self-medication.

Reason for self-medication	Students (n)	%
Minor illness	104	(66.24)
Saves time	55	(35.03)
Saves money	37	(23.56)
Quick relief	37	(23.56)
Self confidence	36	(22.92)
Ease & convenience	27	(17.19)
Crowd avoidance	7	(4.45)

Table 2: Source of information for self-medication

Source of information for self-medication	Students (n)	(%)
Doctor's previous prescription	105	(66.87)
Pharmacist	78	(49.68)
Friends	67	(40.11)
Family	39	(24.84)
Internet/ TV advertisements	23	(14.64)
Books	14	(8.91)
Others	8	(5.09)

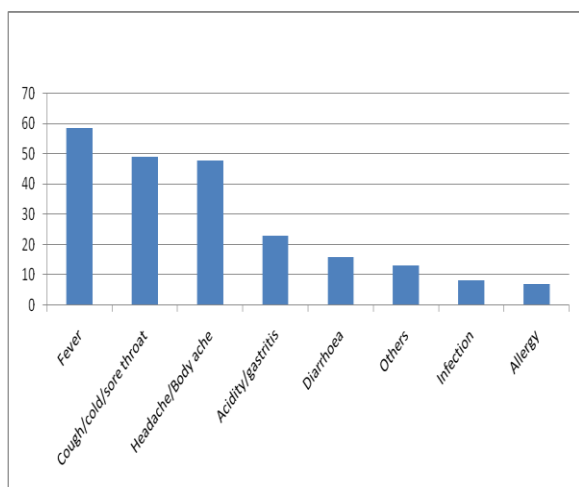


Figure 1: Illnesses for which self-medication was taken.

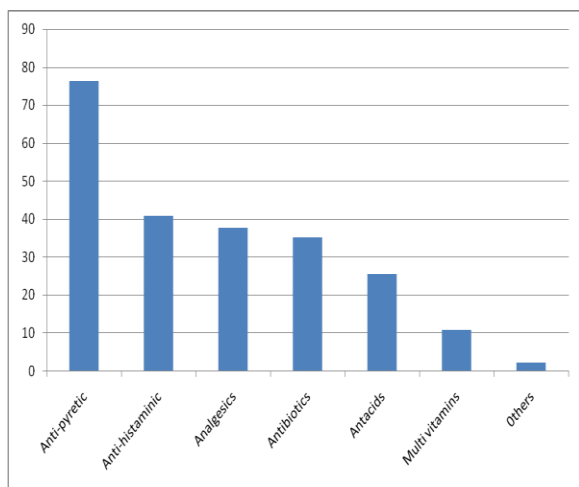


Figure 2: Classes of Drugs used as self-medication.

DISCUSSION

Self-medication is defined as obtaining and consuming drugs without the advice of a physician either for diagnosis, prescription or surveillance of treatment. (4) In our study, we found that 94.01% of respondents practiced self-medication it was more compared to study done by James H et al who found that 44.8 % of the respondents practiced self-medication in their study. (5) In other studies prevalence of self-medication varied widely ranging from 26.2% to as high as 92 %. (6) It must be stressed that self-medication must be practiced with appropriate knowledge to avoid the risk accompanied with it. In our study 69.46% of students opined that self-medication is harmful as it may cause adverse reactions or ineffective treatment. We found that large number of students (87.26%) did not have knowledge about dose and duration of the drugs they took. Similar results were found by Sontakke SD et al in their study on university students. (7) In our study the main reasons for favouring self-medication by the students were the nature of the disease (minor illnesses), time saving & economical. Zafar et al also found similar results in their study on university students in Karachi. (8) Antipyretics were the commonly used by the students in our study; James H et al found that analgesics were commonly group of drugs used by the students in their study. (5)

CONCLUSION

Self-medication is practiced by the students due to various advantages it provides to them. Though students knew that self-medication at times becomes harmful (drug reactions, ineffective treatment) their attitude and practice towards self-medication was positive. Repeated health education should be given to bring behavioural change in attitude and practise regarding self-medication. Proper

regulations must be established and strictly implemented for over the counter-selling of the drugs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Authors like to acknowledge all the students who have participated in the study.

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How to cite this article: Wajantri P, Angadi MM, Masali KA et. al. A study on knowledge, attitude and practice about self medication among college students. *Int J Health Sci Res.* 2014;4(7):11-14.

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