Original Research

Attitude and knowledge about self medication among college students

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ABSTRACT

Background: Self-medication is a part and parcel of self-care which is again an important resource of primary healthcare system. The present study was conducted to assess knowledge and attitude of self medication among college students. **Materials & Methods:** The present study was conducted on 358 college students of both genders. A self-developed questionnaire was used. Any event of use of OTC or prescription medicines without consulting a doctor was considered as self medication. Reason, type of medication and illness was recorded. **Results:** Out of 358 subjects, males were 152 and females were 206. Common reason for self medication was prior exposure seen in 35%, quick relief in 26%, time constraints in 22%, self confidence in 10% and economic constraints in 7%. The difference was significant (P< 0.05). Type of medications was antibiotics in 40%, analgesics in 32%, antipyretics in 17%, vitamins in 6% and herbs in 5%. The difference was significant (P< 0.05). Common illnesses were fever in 15%, stress in 4%, allergy in 31%, acidity in 24% and cold in 26%. **Conclusion:** Most commonly used medication was antibiotic and analgesics. Most common reason for self medication was prior exposure and quick relief.

Key words: Attitude, Knowledge, self medication

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INTRODUCTION

Self-medication is the practice of intake of medicines by the people on their own or with help of a pharmacist, but without proper advice or prescription from a medical professional to treat a self-diagnosed condition. According to WHO, self-medication is a part and parcel of self-care which is again an important resource of primary healthcare system. WHO has also pointed out that responsible self-medication can help prevent and treat ailments that don't require medical consultation and provide a cheaper alternative for treating common illnesses.[1] Self-medication is now increasingly being considered as a component of self-care. Studies done on self-medication reveal that it is fairly common practice, especially in economically deprived countries. However, it is also recognized that responsible self-medication must be accompanied by appropriate health information.[2] Without realizing the repercussions of excess use, people often pop pills for even minor ailments. Irrational use of these drugs causes increased microbial resistance, wastage of resources, masked diagnosis, use of excessive drug dosage and can also lead to drug dependence.[3] On the contrary, if used appropriately, self medication can be time saving, economical and relieves the burden on health professionals, giving them more time to heal major ailments. Starting from the presupposition that no pharmacologically active substance is innocuous to the body, self-medication could be prejudicial to individual and collective health.[4] The present study was conducted to assess knowledge and attitude of self medication among college students.

MATERIALS & METHODS

The present study was conducted in the department of community medicine. It comprised of 358 college students of both genders. All were informed regarding the study and written consent was obtained. Ethical clearance was obtained prior to the study. General information such as name, age, gender etc. was recorded. A self-developed questionnaire was used. Any event of use of OTC or prescription medicines without consulting a doctor was considered as self medication. Reason, type of medication and illness was recorded. Results thus obtained were subjected to

statistical analysis. P value less than 0.05 was considered significant.

RESULTS

Table I Distribution of subjects

| Total- 358		
Gender	Male	Female
Number	152	206

Table I shows that out of 358 subjects, males were 152 and females were 206.

Table II Reason for self medication

| Reason	Number	P value
Self confidence	10%	0.01
Quick relief	26%	
Prior exposure	35%	
Time constraints	22%	
Economic constraints	7%	

Table II shows that common reason for self medication was prior exposure seen in 35%, quick relief in 26%, time constraints in 22%, self confidence in 10% and economic constraints in 7%. The difference was significant (P< 0.05).

Graph I Type of medication
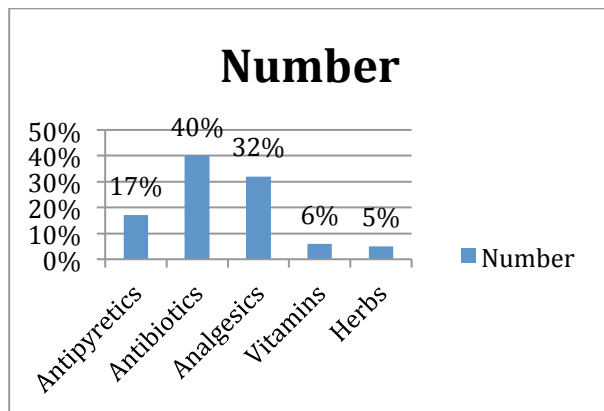
Graph I shows that type of medications was antibiotics in 40%, analgesics in 32%, antipyretics in 17%, vitamins in 6% and herbs in 5%. The difference was significant (P< 0.05).

Graph II Most common illnesses
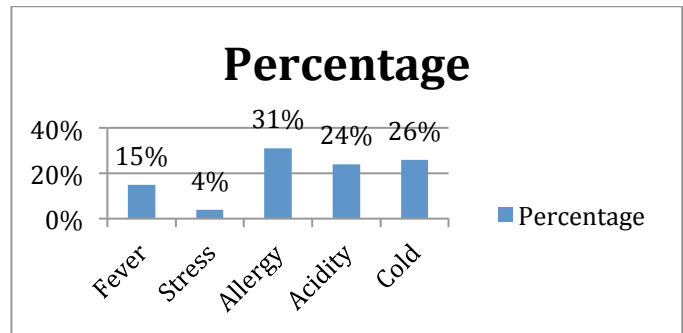
Graph II shows that common illnesses were fever in 15%, stress in 4%, allergy in 31%, acidity in 24% and cold in 26%.

DISCUSSION

Self-medication is treatment of common health problems with medicines without medical supervision. Various studies have reported the practice of self-medication among medical as well as non-medical students. Various socio-demographic factors are also responsible for self-medication practice. Improvement in educational level when increases the risk taking behaviour to treat oneself out of over-confidence, on the other hand low socio-economic status forces people to get over-the-counter medicines directly to save money without opting for professional help to avoid doctor's fee.[5] Irrational self-medication is detrimental to health as it enhances the risks of adverse drug reaction, antimicrobial resistance and also leads to wastage of resources. Over-dosage or under-dosage may lead to damage of organs or incomplete cure. Repeated self medication can also produce drug dependence to certain drugs and misdiagnosis by professionals if being visited for incomplete cure, as symptoms are masked temporarily.[6] The present study was conducted to assess knowledge and attitude of self medication among college students.

We included 358 college students which comprised of 152 males and 206 females. We found that common reason for self medication was prior exposure seen in 35%, quick relief in 26%, time constraints in 22%, self confidence in 10% and economic constraints in 7%. Banerjee et al[7] in their study found that out of 403 students, 40.6 % reported self medication over the given period of time, out of which 33.12 % were habitual users. The most common reason for preferring self-medication included prior experience in 34.21% followed by self confidence about the knowledge of drug in 28.32 % and for quick relief in 26.81 %. The percentage of students suffering from a congenital or a pre-existing illness was a meagre 7%. The most common illnesses prompting self medication included common cold in 49.83 % followed closely by fever in 33.72 % and headache in 19.31%. Antipyretics in 18.62 % and analgesics in 46.14% are the most common self-medicated drugs with vitamins in 15.81 %, native herbs in 9.64 % and steroids in 5.4 % being the less common ones. Old prescriptions (42.41%) and pharmacist (24.82%) were the most common source of information. Regarding previous knowledge about the route, dose, half-life and interactions of various drugs, 66.5 %, 56.8%, 21.3 % and 23.8 % students were noted respectively. Percentage of students who reported side-effects was 48.3 %.

We observed that type of medications was antibiotics in 40%, analgesics in 32%, antipyretics in 17%, vitamins in 6% and herbs in 5%. Common illnesses were fever in 15%, stress in 4%, allergy in 31%, acidity in 24% and cold in 26%. Kumar et al[8] found that a total of 282 students participated in the study, among which 96 were from 1st semester, 88 from 3rdand 98 from 6th semester. Knowledge of self-medication was adequate in 68% of 1st semester, 81% of 3rd and 87% of 6th semester students.85% of respondents from 1st semester, 79% from 3rd and 78% from 6th practiced self-medication.

CONCLUSION

Authors found that most commonly used medication was antibiotic and analgesics. Most common reason for self medication was prior exposure and quick relief.

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