

A COMPARATIVE, QUESTIONNAIRE BASED CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY ON SELF MEDICATION PRACTICE AMONG MEDICAL AND PARAMEDICAL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Background: According to World Health Organization (WHO), self medication is use of medicines to treat self recognized symptoms, or use of a prescribed medicine for chronic symptoms. It is associated with use of prescription drugs, alternative medicines and over the counter drugs (OTC).

Methods: This was a prospective, observational, questionnaire based study where two groups of students were interviewed with a prevalidated questionnaire. The first group comprised of students from MBBS while the second group consisted of students of paramedical courses namely physiotherapy, operation theatre technicians and lab technicians.

Results: A total of 200 students with an average age 19.62 ± 0.65 years participated in the study. Among these students, 100 were medical students. All the students had practiced self medication however, only 51.00% agreed with the concept of self-medication. Considering the significant „p“ value to be <0.05 there was a significant difference among the 2 groups with respect to awareness of generic and brand names of the drugs and importance of completing the course of treatment. 51.00% of medical and 29.00% paramedical students were aware about generic and brand names of drugs while knowledge about importance of completing course of treatment was present in 62% medical and 42% paramedical students. (p value <0.05). Also, there was no significant difference regarding the knowledge about the content, dose, duration of treatment and frequency of drug administration among the two groups.

Conclusion: The present study shows a high prevalence of self-medication among medical and paramedical students of the institution. The knowledge about self-medication was encouraging among the students of both the groups.

Keywords: Self medication, student, knowledge

Introduction

According to World Health Organization (WHO), self medication is use of medicines to treat self recognized symptoms, or use of a prescribed medicine for chronic symptoms. It is associated with use of prescription drugs, alternative medicines and over the counter drugs (OTC).¹

One of the elements of self care is self medication. With worldwide appreciation seen towards self care, self medication is a global phenomenon which has been successfully integrated into health care systems throughout the world. WHO supports responsible self medication, it necessitates that the medicines which are to be used by consumers must have proven efficacy, quality and safety; and must only be indicated following an initial medical diagnosis.² Such medicine comes under the category of OTC medications. These drugs can easily be purchased without prescription in pharmacies and in retail outlets such as supermarkets. Self medication offers various benefits. It helps to reduce the health care costs especially where medical services are limited, such as in remote areas where access to medical services may be difficult. Even in developed countries, through appropriate and effective self medication, patients are able to control

their symptoms to a greater extent and unnecessary consultations with physicians could be avoided.

However, this isn't always the case. Inappropriate self medication occurs when prescription drugs are consumed for incorrect diagnosis, with inadequate dosage, and for incorrect treatment duration. These results in irrational drug use, failure of therapy, delayed seeking of medical advice, wastage of resources, increased chance of resistance to antibiotics, adverse drug reactions and prolonged morbidity.²

Various factors determining self-medication include: socioeconomic factors like growing empowerment, improved quality of education, health consciousness, advanced technology like internet and other communication systems, modern lifestyle, easy accessibility to the medicines, awareness about treatment of illnesses and rehabilitation, inappropriate nutrition.^{3,4}

Material and Methods

This was a prospective, observational, questionnaire based study where two groups of students were interviewed with a prevalidated questionnaire. The first group comprised of students from MBBS while the second group consisted of

students of paramedical courses namely physiotherapy, operation theatre technicians and lab technicians.

Details and purpose of the study was explained to the students clearly. Students not willing to participate in the study were excluded. The questionnaire comprised of demographic data and 15 questions regarding the knowledge, attitude and practice of self-medication. Details regarding the knowledge about the drugs used in self-medication, generic and brand names, importance of completing course of treatment, package insert, source of information, common conditions for taking self-medication, commonly used medicines, side effects, advantages and disadvantages and the role of pharmacist in self-medication were emphasized in the questionnaire. The collected data was analysed statistically by using Epi-info software.

Results

Table 1: Knowledge about content, dose, duration of treatment and side effects

Knowledge	Medical student	Para medical student	p-value
Content only	32.00%	40.00%	<0.05
Content, dose	34.00%	24.00%	0.21
Content, dose, duration of treatment	16.00%	22.00%	0.123
Content, dose, duration, side effects	18.00%	9.00%	<0.05

A total of 200 students with an average age 19.62 ± 0.65 years participated in the study. Among these students, 100 were medical students. All the students had practiced self medication however, only 51.00% agreed with the concept of self-medication. Considering the significant „p“ value to be <0.05 there was a significant difference among the 2 groups with respect to awareness of generic and brand names of the drugs and importance of completing the course of treatment. 51.00% of medical and 29.00% paramedical students were aware about generic and brand names of drugs while knowledge about importance of completing course of treatment was present in 62% medical and 42% paramedical students. („p“ value<0.05). Also, there was no significant difference regarding the knowledge about the content, dose, duration of treatment and frequency of drug administration among the two groups.

Table 2: Reasons for self-medication

Reasons	Medical student	Para medical student	p-value
Minor illness	84.00%	76.00%	<0.05
Save time and money	50.00%	12.00%	<0.05
Avoid going to doctor	40.00%	16.00%	<0.05
Resolved illness previously	50.00%	30.00%	<0.05
Resolved illness in family and friends	32.00%	16.00%	<0.05
Left over medicine at home	4.00%	4.00%	>0.05

The reasons for taking self-medication were minor illnesses, saves time and money, avoid hassles from going to doctor, left over medicine at home. However, significant number of medical students took selfmedication because the drug resolved the illness previously for the students themselves or for family and friends.

Discussion

William Osler once commented, “The desire to take medicine is perhaps the greatest feature which distinguishes man from animals.” This desire plays a key role for the practice of self-medication which can be defined as utilization of drugs without the advice of a physician either for diagnosis, prescription or surveillance of treatment.⁶

Various studies have reported the practice of self medication among medical as well as non-medical students. Hence, the present study was planned to compare among medical and paramedical students so as to bring about a change in the academic activity. In the present study, the prevalence of self-medication was 100% unlike other studies where the prevalence ranged from 57.1% to 92%.⁶⁻⁸

In a study conducted by Abay et. al 55.6% of students agree with the concept of self-medication whereas in the present study, 47.3% of the students agree.⁹ Here, an imbalance was noticed with respect to the practice of self-medication and agreeing with the concept of self-medication. The reason may be lack of confidence, inappropriate awareness about the medicines, their benefits and hazards. In addition to minor illnesses and financial benefits which were the common reasons for students taking self-medication as observed in a study conducted in North West Ethiopia, the other common factors in our study were, the drug resolved the illness previously for the students themselves or for family and friends and also it avoids hassle going to doctor.¹⁰

Conclusion

The present study shows a high prevalence of selfmedication among medical and paramedical students of the institution. The knowledge about self-medication was encouraging among the students of both the groups.

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