



Self-Medication in Medical Students: A Cross Sectional Survey

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Abstract

Self-medication involves individuals or their carers administering a medical drug of their own choice for symptomatic relief and in the hope of a “cure”, without seeking professional medical advice. The aim of this descriptive cross-sectional study conducted at was to identify the occurrence of self-medication among medical students. We observed 50 cases of self-medication (from a total of 500 subjects).

Keywords: Self Medication; Medical Students; Cross Sectional Survey

Introduction

Self-medication is a term used to describe the various ways in which the individuals or those responsible for them decide on which drug to administer for symptomatic relief or “cure”, without seeking a professional medical evaluation of their condition [1].

Self-medication can involve sharing other people’s drugs, using left over prescriptions or failing to use medicines prescribed by professional medical practitioners [2,3]. In developed countries the prevalence of self-medication varies between 30% and 90% [4-7].

The most commonly-used drugs are analgesics, antipyretics and NSAIDs [8,9]. Furthermore, the temporary relief of symptoms can mask a disease which goes undetected and can progress to a more serious condition.

Material and Methods

A cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out aimed at

identifying the occurrence of self-medication among medical college students.

A standardized questionnaire was applied with a view to evaluating the occurrence of self-medication prior to the consultation. Questions referred to the type of drug used, who indicated the particular substance, why it was decided to use non-prescription medication and whether any changes in the patient’s clinical status had been noticed after using the drug.

Inclusion Criteria: Patients had used a medication before specialist consultation.

Results and Discussion

Of the 50 patients who met the inclusion criteria, 30 (60.0%) were males and 20 (40.0%) were females. Drugs were recommended by family members or friends (48.0%), pharmacy employees (20.0%) or by trainee doctors.

Drugs	Frequency	Percentage
Analgesics	20	40.00%
antipyretics	15	30.00%
Cough Syrups	8	16.00%
Others	7	14.00%

Table 1: Most common self-medications.

The most commonly-used drugs encountered in our study were: analgesics (40.00%), and anti-pyretic. (30%) Seagall et al [8] in 1990 observed the similar pattern of self-medication. In a study conducted in Brazil [9] similar results were obtained.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Our study revealed that self-medication is quite common among medical students. It is important that medical students should be given impartial scientific information on the nonprescription drugs freely on sale, in the hope of reducing massive consumption. One further important point: students should be encouraged to seek professional medical help from the experts and made aware of the positive advantages to health of a proper medical consultation rather than resorting to self-medication.

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