



SELF MEDICATION PRACTICES AMONG UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS IN SOUTH INDIA: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Introduction : Self medication is usually defined as intake of any type of drugs for treating oneself without professional supervision to relieve an illness or condition. In this study it was aimed to determine the knowledge of nursing students on self medication practices.

Objectives: To determine the self medication practices among nursing students.

Method : This cross sectional descriptive study was conducted to assess the self medication practices among nursing students. They were selected through Non probability purposive sampling and prevalidated semistructured questionnaire related to various aspects of self medication used. The data was analysed using SPSS version 16 and the results expressed as proportions

Results

A total of 100 nursing students surveyed, self-medication was reported among 84%. The respondents who used self-medication found it to be using for minor ailments. The most common ailments for which self-medication were used were: fever (37.56%) and pain (22.3%). The students referred previous prescription (59.52%) for the medications. Antipyretics (43.3%), analgesics (32%) and antibiotics (15.33%) were the most common self-medicated drugs. Of the respondents, 83.33% were unaware of the adverse effects of the medication .

Conclusion

The prevalence of self-medication among nursing students is high. A significant number of students are unaware of the adverse effects of the medication that they themselves take and suggest to others. Therefore, potential problems of self-medication should be emphasised to the students.

Key words : Nursing students , Self medication practices

I. INTRODUCTION

Self-care is a behavioral response of individuals to promote or restore their health. Self-medication which is one form of self-care is an important initial response to illness.¹ Self-medication is the use of drugs to treat self diagnosed disorders or symptoms, or the intermittent or continued use of prescribed drug for chronic or recurrent disease or symptoms.²

In several studies it has been found that inappropriate self-medication causes wastage of resources, increases resistance of pathogens and generally causes serious health hazards such as adverse drug reactions, prolonged suffering and drug dependence.³

The World Health Organization (WHO) stated that, "It has become widely accepted that self-medication has an important place in the healthcare system. Recognition of the responsibility of individuals for their own health and awareness that professional care for minor ailments is often unnecessary has contributed to this view.³ Improvements in people's general knowledge, level of education and socioeconomic status in many countries form a reasonable basis for successful self-medication."⁴

A recent study was conducted in Andhra Pradesh, India regarding assessment of self medication practices among medical, pharmacy and nursing students at a tertiary care teaching hospital which showed that out of 446,386(86.54%) of them practiced self-medication. Knowledge from books and previous experience of the illness were the major factors for self-medication.⁵

In economically deprived countries, most episode of illness are treated by self medication. In a number of developing countries many drugs are dispensed over the counter without medical supervision. Inappropriate self-medication however may result in serious health hazards such as adverse drug reactions, drug dependence

and increased resistance of pathogens.⁶ The present study was undertaken to identify the reasons for, and the patterns of, self-medication among medical students.

II. METHODS

This cross sectional study was undertaken in Yenepoya nursing college, Mangalore, India with the from the Institutional Ethics Committee. The study population consisted of Bsc nursing students from first to final year, within the age group of 16–25 years. Students were selected for the study by a convenient sampling method. The participants were briefed about the nature of the study, consent was given and a pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire administered to them. The information pertaining to the pattern of self-medication, indications for self-medication and drugs used for self-medication were included in the questionnaire. The investigators were present in case the respondents required assistance. For the purpose of the study, certain medical terms were explained to the first-year students, including dysmenorrhea, antipyretics and analgesics. The data was analysed using SPSS version 16.00 and summarised as proportions.

III. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Self-medication is becoming an increasingly important area within healthcare, and this study has shown that it is even more prevalent among nursing students. A total of 100 students participated in the study, of whom 90 (90%) female and 10 (10%) male. Among these 100 students, 16 (16%), 31 (31%), 26(26%) and 27(27%) were studying in their first year, second year, third year and final year respectively (Table 1). A total of 84 (84%) of nursing students said they practiced self-medication. All the variables were denoted in multiple response questions.

Sl No.	Demographic variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Age in years		
	a) 16-20	57	57
	b) 21-25	43	43
2	Gender of the participant		
	a) Male	10	10
	b) Female	90	90
3	Year of studying BSc nursing		
	a) 1st year	16	16
	b) 2nd year	31	31
	c) 3rd year	26	26
	d) 4th year	27	27
4	Condition of participant		
	a) Healthy	87	87
	b) Often gets illness	13	13

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of study population

Out of 100 student 84 (84%) students are practicing self medication in which 53 (63.09%) were practicing self medication for mild illness. 42 (50%) of them practiced self medication 1-2 times in the past year and 51 (60.71%) of students are not sure of treating common infectious disease successfully by self-medication. The most common source of information for self-medication were by previous prescription 50 (59.52%) and advice from third parties 21 (25%) which is similar to findings of study conducted in Northern India which reveal that 49% referred their previous prescription and 26% referred tv/newspaper for self medication.⁶ 64 (76.19%) of nursing students were buying drugs for self-medication by mentioning name of drug.

The study found that the conditions prompting self-medication (Figure 1) were the common cold and fever (37.56%) and pain (22.33%), followed by gastrointestinal ailments, i.e. cough(13.19%), sore throat (12.18%), dysmenorrhea(6.09%), vomiting (3.55%), diarrhoea(3.04%) and 2.03% for others (constipation) which is concordance to study conducted by Yasmin mumtaz which revealed that self medication is practised for fever, cough and pain relief.⁷

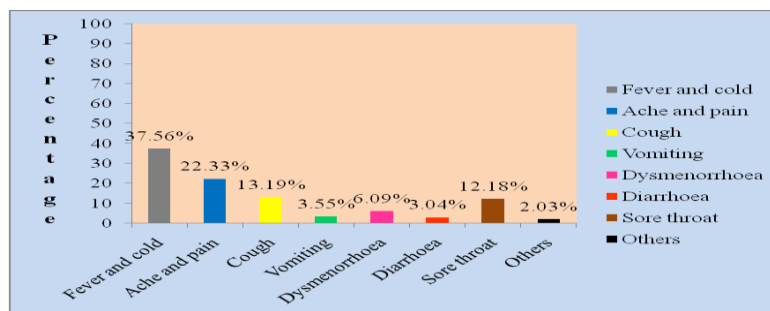


Figure 1: Indications for self-medication

The classes of drugs that were commonly used (Figure 2) were antipyretics (43.3%), analgesics (32%), analgesics (32%) and antibiotics (15.33%). Some potentially harmful drugs were also used, such as antacids (8%), sedatives (0.6%) and others (0.6%). This is similar to studies done earlier which showed antipyretic (65%), analgesics (88.33%) and antibiotics (35.2%) were commonly used.⁸

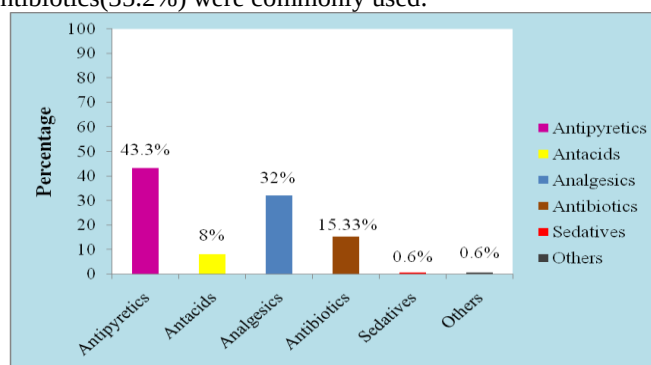


Figure 2: Drugs used for self-medication

It was found that of 84 students who practiced self medication, 47 (59.95%) suggested medication for others most commonly to family or friends. A significant number 70 (83.33%) of nursing students were unaware of the adverse effect of drugs they took. The study found that 14 (16.66%) students had experienced adverse reaction 8 (57.14%) consulted doctor and remaining 6 (42.85%) changed the medication on their own.

12 (75%) of students were not practicing self-medication believing it to cause adverse drug reaction, whereas 46 (46%) of students believe self-medication to be an acceptable practice. 34 (40.47%) were taking antibiotics as self-medication in which only 19 (55.88%) completed the course of medicine.

32 (27.35%) of students believes self-medication relieves from minor illness, 25 (21.36%) saves money, 23 (19.65%) saves time and 24 (20.51%) easily available, which seems to be a benefits for them.

Students feel that self-medication in other hand, serve as a disadvantage. 70 (47.61%) of nursing students feel there is risk for adverse reaction and 27 (18.36%) feel there may be a risk of wrong diagnosis.

IV. CONCLUSION

This descriptive study has found that self-medication is very common among nursing students, facilitated by the easy availability of drugs, and information from textbooks/seniors. A significant number of students are unaware of the adverse effects of the medication that they themselves take and suggest to others. Since inappropriate self-medication has the potential to cause serious harm, not only to the students themselves but also to those whom they suggest medication, potential problems of self-medication should be emphasised to the students to minimise this risk. Restriction of sale of drugs with potentially harmful effects should be implemented effectively with monitoring systems between the physicians and pharmacists. Steps can also be taken to educate pharmacists on the need to cross-check with the prescribing physician while dispensing such drugs.

Raising the issue of more orientation, and stressing upon all the related topics in their curriculum is required to build up new generations combating unregulated self-medication. The limitations of this study included the absence of a comparative group, such as students from another field; the small sample size; and the absence of interventions, like providing information regarding hazards of self-medication

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares that they have no competing interest.

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