

Self-Medication Patterns Among Medical Students in North India

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Abstract

Introduction: Self-medication results in wastage of resources, increases resistance of pathogens and generally causes serious health hazards such as adverse drug reactions, prolonged suffering and drug dependence.

Method: A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted. The participants were medical students from first to final year. The data was collected using a questionnaire. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 2.0.

Result: A total of 100 students, 61 (61.00%) male and 39 (39.00%) female, were included in the study. Of the medical students surveyed, self-medication was reported among 88%. The most common ailments for which self-medication were used were the common cold and headache. The students consulted their textbooks and peers for the medications. Antipyretics and analgesics were the most common self-medicated drugs.

Conclusion: The prevalence of self-medication among medical students is high, facilitated by the easy availability of drugs and information from textbooks or seniors. The potential problems of self-medication should be emphasized to the students.

Keywords: Self-medication; Medical students; Drugs

Introduction

Self-medication can be defined as obtaining and consuming drugs without the advice of a physician for diagnosis, prescription or surveillance of treatment. [1-3] Self-medication differs from self-care in that it involves drugs that may do good or cause harm. [4] 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 [4-7].

Material and Methods

A cross-sectional study was undertaken. The study population consisted of medical students from first to final year, within the age group of 18-25 years. 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 data was analyzed using SPSS version 20.00.

Results

A total of 100 students participated in the study, of whom 61(61.00%) were male and 31 (39.00%) were female. A total of 88 (88.00%) participants practiced self-medication(Figure 1-4).

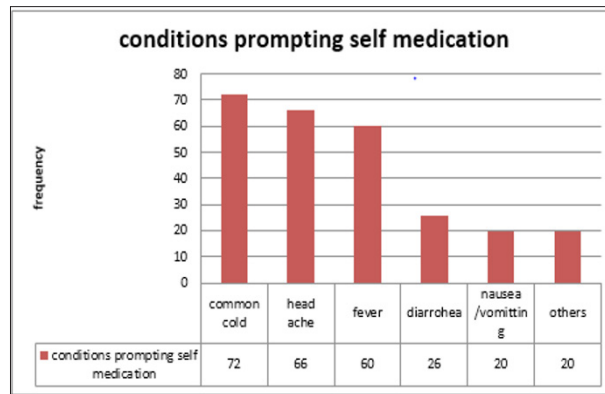


Figure 1: Conditions prompting self medication.

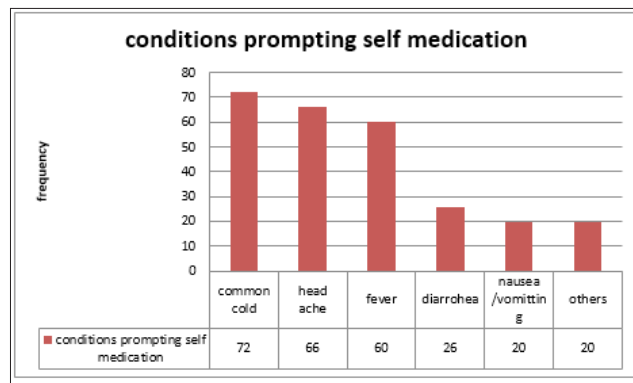


Figure 2: Class of drugs for self-medication.

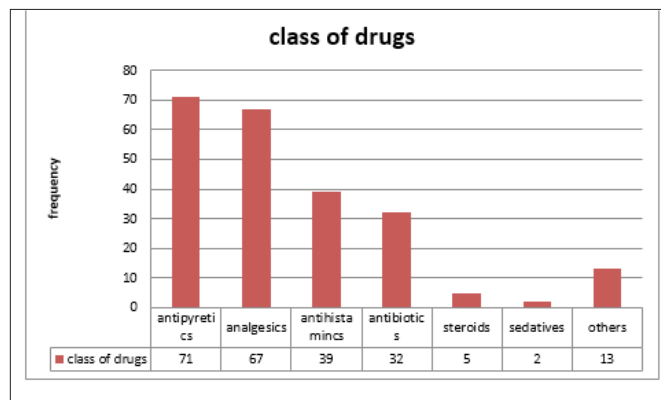


Figure 3: Common sources of information for self medication.

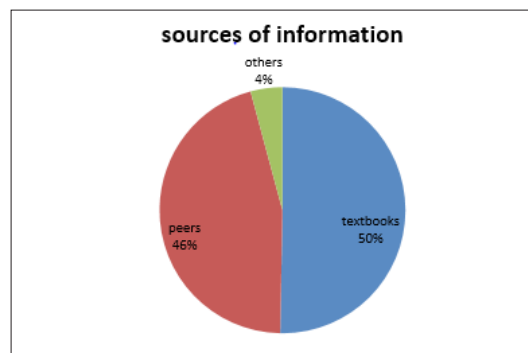


Figure 4: Sources of information.

Discussion

Self-medication is becoming an increasingly important area within healthcare, and this study has shown that it is even more prevalent among medical students. This study has found a prevalence of self-medication of 88 % in medical students in contrast to 59% in a non-medical population in a previous study [2]. It is also noted that a high level of education and professional status are predictive factors for self-medication [4]. This is like the findings in a study conducted by Erlend Hem and colleagues [6] (90%) but is higher than the findings (60%) in the study conducted by Henry James and colleagues [4].

In the study it was noticed that the classes of drugs that were commonly used were antipyretics analgesics, antihistamines and antibiotics. This is like studies done earlier [4,5]. The study has found that self-medication is very common among medical students, facilitated by the easy availability of drugs, and information from textbooks/seniors. 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 emphasized to the students to minimize this risk.

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