
Research Article

Evaluation of Practice of Self Medication among Medical and Nursing Students- A Comparative Analytical Study

Prashant Wadagbalkar¹, Akhilesh Kumar^{2*}

¹Professor and Head, Department of Pharmacology, Government Medical College, Vidisha-464001 (MP) India

²Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Government Medical College, Vidisha-464001 (MP) India

Corresponding Author- Dr. Akhilesh Kumar,

Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Government Medical College, Vidisha-464001 (MP) India

Abstract:

Self-medication is defined as the use of medication, whether modern or traditional, for self treatment. Self care can be defined as primary public health resource in the health care system. It consists of the health activities and health related decision making of individuals, family, friends, colleagues at work and so on. It includes self-medication, non-drug self treatment, social support in illness and first aid in everyday life. Self Medication is practiced in all ages and by both sexes. Self-medication affects both developed as well as developing countries. Previous studies report that there is increase in trend of self-medication globally and so in India as well. In developing countries like India, easy availability of a wide range of drugs coupled with inadequate health services results in increased proportion of drugs used as self-medication compared to prescribed drugs. The present study was a questionnaire based study conducted in Tertiary Health Care Teaching Institute and University of Central India. The study population consists of Second Year Medical and Second Year Nursing Students. A Prevalidated Questionnaire containing questions regarding self medication was distributed to participants who were present on the day of study and showed willingness to participate in the study. Out of total 130 respondents, Medical and Nursing students were 80 and 50 respectively. The practice of self-medication was common in both the groups, with more prevalence in Nursing students. Medical students were found to be more cautious regarding self-medication and preferred seeking consultation as compared to Nursing students, indicating a positive influence of medical knowledge over their practice of self-medication.

Keywords: Self medication, Questionnaire Study, Pharmacology Curriculum

Introduction

As rightly said 'Health is Wealth', everybody is conscious and concerned about his own health. For their own wellbeing people have many therapeutic options in the form of modern medicine, ayurveda, homeopathy, yoga, meditation etc. Now-a-days, people are keen to accept more personal responsibility for their health status and to obtain as much sound information as possible from expert sources in order to help them make appropriate decisions in health care. Government and health insurers are increasingly encouraging self care as one means of limiting the rate of increase in third party funding of health care⁽¹⁾.

Self medication is defined as the utilization of drugs to treat self-diagnosed disorders or symptoms, or the irregular or continuous use of a prescribed drug for chronic or repeated diseases or symptoms. A major deficit of self medication is the lack of clinical assessment of the condition by a qualified

medical professional which could result in overlooked diagnosis and hindrances in appropriate treatments⁽²⁾. Self-medication affects both developed as well as developing countries. In developing countries like India, easy availability of a wide range of drugs coupled with inadequate health services results in increased proportion of drugs used as self-medication compared to prescribed drugs⁽¹⁾.

In recent years there has been an increasing trend in self medication with over-the-counter (OTC) medicines available in pharmacies and in retail outlets⁽³⁾.

The present study was carried out in order to evaluate and compare the practice of self-medication among Medical and Nursing Students with special emphasis to study the topic of Self Medication can included in Pharmacology Curriculum.

Materials and Methods

This was a questionnaire based study conducted in the Tertiary Health Care Teaching Institute and University of Central India. The study population consists of Medical students and Nursing students. Those students who were present on the day of study and showed willingness to participate in the study were included in the study.

A prevalidated questionnaire containing questions regarding Practice of Self medication was prepared. Before subjecting the questionnaire to the respondents, they were briefed about the nature and purpose of the study, procedure of completion of the questionnaire and certain operational terms.

Self-medication was any event of use of over-the-

counter or prescription drugs without prior consultation to the doctor for that episode of illness. A doctor was a person who is medically qualified and registered under State or National Medical Council to prescribe the medications.

Medication was the substance used to relieve the symptoms of particular episode of illness.

Both the respondent groups (Medical and Nursing Students) were assessed separately. The questionnaire was administered in small batches and all the students returned the duly completed questionnaire, indicating a response rate of 100% in both the groups.

The data was presented in tabular form and analyzed statistically.

Results

Results are shown in **Table-1** and divided into two groups:

Table 1: Data collected through Study

Sr. No.	Parameters	Nursing Students (n=50)	Medical Students (n=80)
01.	Practice of Self Medication	44 (88%)	67 (83.75%)
02.	Reasons for favouring Self Medication		
	Mild Illness	18 (36%)	36 (45%)
	Previous Experiences of Self Medication	13 (26%)	16 (20%)
	Lack of Time	09 (18%)	12 (15%)
	Learning Experiences	10 (20%)	16 (20%)
03.	Class of drugs used		
	Antipyretics	13 (26%)	21 (26.25%)
	Antihistamines	08 (16%)	12 ((15%)
	Antacids	09 (18%)	14 (17.5%)
	Antimicrobials	09 (18%)	16 (20%)
	NSAIDs	11 (22%)	17 (21.25%)
04.	Source of drug information		
	Senior Students	15 (30%)	38 (47.5%)
	T.V. Advertisements	06 (12%)	08 (10%)
	Old Prescriptions	08 (16%)	10 (12.5%)
	Chemist	12 (24%)	08 (10%)
	Family Members	09 (18%)	16 (20%)
05.	Addition in Pharmacology Curriculum	37 (74%)	67 (83.75%)

Group A – Practice of Self-medication

Both the groups practiced self-medication, but the prevalence was found to be more among Nursing students. In Nursing students it was 88%, while in Medical students It was 83.75%.

The major reasons for favouring self-medication was mild illness. The percentage of which was 36% in case of Nursing students, whereas in Medical students the figures was 45%.

The class of drugs most commonly used by both the groups

was antipyretics and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

The most common source of drug information in both the groups was their senior students. The Nursing students were more likely to seek advice from chemist as compared to Medical students.

Group B – Can the Topic of Self Medication included in Pharmacology Curriculum

Out of 130 participants, Majority of the students (104) suggested for addition of the topic of Self Medication in Pharmacology Curriculum. The percentage of which was 74% in case of Nursing students, whereas in Medical students the figure was 87.75%.

Discussions

There is paucity of data on self-medication among medical students in India.

In the present study, the status of practice of self medication among Nursing students was evaluated and compared the same with Medical students.

The data represented in this study was the information provided by the respondents using a prevalidated questionnaire.

This study showed that the practice of self-medication was prevalent in both groups; 88% in Nursing students and 83.75% in Medical students. The studies on self-medication have reported a range of prevalence from as low as 26.22% (4) to as high as 92% (5). In Medical students prevalence was slightly low as compared to Nursing students. This could be due to improved medical knowledge but further confirmation will be only after testing in larger sample size.

Majority of the students consumed medicines for fever, headache, cough cold and body ache. Thus, the drugs used were NSAIDs, antipyretics, antihistamines and nasal decongestants. These findings were consistent with the previous findings (6,7,8).

The sources of drug information were mainly Senior students, Chemist, old prescriptions and family members, though media played a small but vital role. The promotional advertising of OTCs in the mass media probably changes people's knowledge of and attitude to medicines, thus increasing drug consumption as an easy way to take care of health problems (9).

The WHO has reported self medication to be economical and time saving alternative for the treatment of minor ailments (10). Similarly, in our study both the groups agreed upon the reasons for self medication being minor illness, lack of time etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, considering education an important tool for developing the right attitude towards self-medication and knowledge of appropriate and rational use of drugs; public health awareness and education should be advocated in rural as well as in urban settings. These interventions will help in minimizing the hazards of self-medication and promoting responsible self-medication that can be used to prevent and treat symptoms and ailments that do not require medical consultation. This will definitely reduce the pressure on medical services, especially when these are limited in developing countries like India.

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