

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

SELF-MEDICATION PRACTICE AMONG FIRST YEAR MEDICAL STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY, UNIVERSITY OF LAHORE

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Background: Self-medication is the use of medicines by individuals themselves for the treatment of self-diagnosed ailments/conditions. The objective of this study was to assess the pattern of self-medication practice among the 1st year MBBS and BDS students of University College of Medicine and Dentistry (UCMD), Lahore. **Methods:** A cross-sectional questionnaire based study was conducted amongst 1st year medical students and were selected according to inclusion and exclusion criteria. A structured questionnaire was administered. Purpose of the study was explained to students and confidentiality was ensured. **Results:** Seventy-four percent of the students practiced self-medication and 26% did not. It was observed that antibiotics (42%) were amongst the commonest drugs used followed by cough suppressants (20%). Most students (62%) reported to use self-medication to save time. Sixty-five percent reported that they recovered completely by self-medication, 21% had other problems, 10% had prolonged morbidity and 4% developed complications. **Conclusion:** Self-medication is widely practiced among medical students of UCMD, Lahore.

Keywords: Self-medication, Medical students, Lahore

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INTRODUCTION

WHO has pointed out that practice of responsible self-medication is an effective way of treating minor ailments and it also reduces burden on health care services.¹ Self-medication is use of medicines by the individuals themselves for the treatment of self-diagnosed conditions. But there are many risks associated with such practices as; self-diagnosis can be incorrect, it can lead to delay in seeking medical care, adverse reactions of drugs, drug interactions, under or over dosage of drugs, side effects, incorrect administration of drugs, underlying disease can be masked, risk of dependence and drug abuse can also develop.² Antimicrobial resistance is now a worldwide problem due to irrational use of antibiotics.³

In developing countries where drugs are available without prescription, prevalence of self-medication is high in medical students despite the fact that they are aware of its harmful effects. Very few studies have been conducted in Pakistan on self-medication practices among medical students. A study done on university students in Karachi showed that prevalence of self-medication was 76%.⁴ In Islamabad the prevalence of self-medication was 42% among university students.⁵

Medical students are future practitioners and also have knowledge about drugs therefore it is important to analyse the practice of self-medication amongst them. A study conducted in West Bengal on medical students showed that almost 57% of students practiced self-medication and drugs commonly used

were antibiotics, analgesics, antipyretics, cough suppressants and anti-ulcers. Same study showed that the reason for self-medication was perception of illness as mild, some preferred it to save time and others cited that it is cost effective.⁶ The aim of this study is to assess the pattern of self-medication practice, commonly used medicines, factors responsible for self-medication and end result of this practice among first year MBBS and BDS students of University College of Medicine and Dentistry, Lahore.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

This was a cross-sectional, questionnaire based study. The study was conducted in UCMD, Lahore. First year MBBS and BDS students (session 2015) of UCMD, Lahore were included in the study.

One hundred and sixty students were selected by simple random sampling (lottery method). Prior permission was obtained from the ethics committee of the institution for conducting the study. Purpose of the study was explained to the participating students and confidentiality was ensured. Informed consent was obtained from every student before filling the questionnaire.

First year MBBS and BDS students were contacted in Feb 2015. Students were selected by simple random (lottery) method. The purpose of the study was explained to all the selected students and their consent was obtained. They were asked to fill up a printed, structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was pre-tested on 2nd year students who were not included in the

study. The questionnaire contained questions regarding demographic information, whether the students sought self-medication in the last one month, drugs used, the reason for not consulting a doctor, and the results of this practice. The returned questionnaires were checked for completeness of data and were analysed using SPSS-21.

RESULTS

One hundred and fifty-six out of 160 completed questionnaires were received. Out of these 64% were girls and 36% were boys. A total of 115 (74%) students reported practicing self-medication and 41 (26%) reported not practicing self-medication during the last month. Forty-two percent subjects used antibiotics, 20% used cough suppressants, 8% used analgesics, 5% used anti-pyretic, and 25% used any other medicine without the prescription of a doctor (Table-1).

Sixty-two percent subjects reported that they practiced self-medication to save time, 3% to save money, 14% to hide their illness, and 21% had other reasons (Table-2).

Sixty-five percent respondents reported that they completely recovered, 10% reported prolonged morbidity, 4% reported that complications developed and 21% were not certain whether it was effective or not (Table-3).

Table-1: Drugs used by the subjects

Type of medicine used	% of students
Antibiotics	42
Cough Suppressants	20
Analgesics	8
Anti-pyretics	5
Any other medicine	25

Table-2: Reasons for self-medication

Reasons for self-medication	% of students
To save time	62
To hide illness	14
To save money	3
Other reasons	21

Table-3: Results of self-medication

End result of self-medication	% of students
Complete recovery	65
Prolonged morbidity	10
Complications developed	4
Uncertain	21

DISCUSSION

The present study indicates that self-medication is widely practiced among 1st year medical and dental students of UCMD. Seventy-four percent practiced self-medication and 26% did not. A study done in Karachi showed that prevalence of self-medication amongst university students was 76%.⁴ Another study from Islamabad showed that prevalence was 42% amongst university students.⁵

In the present study it was observed that antibiotics were amongst the commonest (42%) drugs used followed by cough suppressants (20%). Most students (62%) reported using self-medication to save time. Sixty-five percent reported that they recovered completely, 21% were uncertain whether self-medication was effective or not, 10% had prolonged morbidity and in 4% complications developed.

CONCLUSION

Self-medication is widely practiced by medical students of UCMD, Lahore. Responsible self-medication can be a way of treating minor illnesses, saving time, and reducing burden on health facilities but inappropriate practice may lead to serious consequences. Need arises to educate our future doctors about advantages and disadvantages of such practices.

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