

Self medication: Rising trends

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Self-medication is rapidly evolving major public health concern. Pharmacists or pharmacy attendants play an important role in fostering self-medication among the public and this is supported with the increasing consultation cost.

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Self Medication means medication taken by self without consort. It is an old age practice but currently gain major public health concern. In developing countries like India most episodes of several illnesses were treated by self medication because of easy availability of a wide range of drugs and inadequate health services [1].

World Health Organization defines "Self medication as the use of drugs to treat self diagnosed disorders or symptoms or the intermittent or continued use of prescribed drug(s) for chronic or recurrent disease or symptoms." [2].

Simply it can be define as the consumption of medicinal products with the purpose of treating diseases or symptoms, or even promoting health, without a prescription provided by a medical professional. [3] or

Self-medication involves acquiring medicines without a prescription, resubmitting old prescriptions to purchase medicines, sharing medicines with relatives or members of one's social circle or using leftover medicines stored at home [4].

The Prevalence of self medication in India varies widely from 31% to 90%. [3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]. It depends on many factors like nature of the disease, educational qualification of the person, non availability of the specialized person (during traveling), etc. [3]. Self Medication were consider common among singles, increase age, high educated patients, women and for short term relief of symptom [3, 7, 10].

This pattern varies from one community to another, and with individual characteristics. The commonest conditions that led to self-medication were headache, fever, cough, sore throat, diarrhea, musculoskeletal pain, minor

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Burns or bruises, gastrointestinal upset, skin problems, and dyspepsia [11]. The most commonly used medication were analgesics followed by antacids, antibiotics, nutritional supplements, cough syrups, contraceptives and antispasmodic. [10, 11]. Topical applications is found to be an important area in the practice [11]. In addition to allopathic medicines, it was also common in homeopathy and ayurveda [12]. Some other factors like Urge of self care, feeling of sympathy towards family members in sickness, lack of health services, poverty, ignorance, misbeliefs, extensive advertisement and use of drugs from informal sectors such as open markets and quacks, illegal purveyors of drugs (nonlicensed sellers in the market), etc are responsible for growing trend of self-medication [3, 8]. Inappropriate self medication could lead into Poisoning, allergy, habituation, addiction, dependence, wastage of resources and increased resistance of pathogen [3, 13]. The attitudes of some health professionals towards poly-pharmacy, contributed immensely in term of exposing the general public to a number of drugs and most importantly justifying their subsequent actions of abusing such drugs [13]. Health education is a important tool for this problem. Health education should be concentrated to aware the public about the health hazards of self medication. This awareness not only limited to general people but also involve doctors and pharmacist [7]. Provoking mass media activities by newspapers, radio, T.V, posters, messages at public places should be checked. Strict legislations should be implemented in banning advertisement and sale over the counter drugs without doctor's prescription. IEC activities should be strengthened to let know people about hazards of self-medication and for availing health services from Government which is free of cost [8]. Qualitative methods like focus group discussions and in depth interviews to know probe reasons for self medication could be carried out. [7]. Nowadays, trends are going toward self care. There are increasing demands from the public, government and within the medical profession for doctors to play a more active part in the promotion of self-care [12].

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