

Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude and Practices on Self-medication with Over-the-counter Medicines among Pregnant Women in Colombo, Sri Lanka

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Background: Self-medication during pregnancy is a crucial topic to discuss due to its effects on both the mother and the fetus. Most of the pregnant women rely on over-the-counter (OTC) medicines for self-medication regarding pregnancy-related conditions. However, published data on self-medication among pregnant women in Sri Lanka is scarce.

Objective: To assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding self-medication with OTC medicines

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among pregnant women attending maternity clinics in six Medical Officer of Health (MOH) areas in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Data were collected from 399 participants (selected through a simple random sampling method), using a self-administered questionnaire. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 27.0.

Results: Among respondents, 63.4% were in the age group of 20-30 years, and 38.3% were Tamil. Moreover, 6.8% used self-medication and iron supplements were the most self-medicated (74.4%) by the participants. The mean(\pm SD) score for knowledge was 4.38(\pm 0.873), and for attitude and practice, those were 27.56(\pm 3.752) and 20.35(\pm 4.325), respectively. Participants' practices were significantly associated with ethnicity, educational level, and gestational stage ($p=0.036$, $p\leq 0.001$, $p\leq 0.001$), respectively. Significant and positive linear correlations were observed between knowledge and attitude ($r=0.375$, $p<0.001$), attitude and practice ($r=0.518$, $p<0.001$), and knowledge and practice ($r=0.224$, $p<0.001$). However, the majority of the participants 87% had misconceptions that antibiotics can be used at any stage of pregnancy, and 93% believed that they can use any medicine at any stage of pregnancy. Additionally, most participants (96%) believed they can use old prescriptions to purchase medicines during pregnancy.

Conclusions: The study elucidates a higher level of knowledge among participants regarding self-medication during pregnancy. However, there is a need for improvements in attitudes and practices on the same aspect. Targeted awareness campaigns should focus on ensuring safer self-medication practices.

Keywords: Knowledge, Over-the-counter medicines, Pregnant women, Self-medication, Sri Lanka

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