

Practice of self-medication among the nursing students of a college of nursing in the northern part of Sri Lanka

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Self-medication is defined as the use of medications by a patient on his own initiative or on the advice of a pharmacist or a lay person instead of consulting a medical practitioner (WHO 2008). Self-medication practice is more common in healthcare students. This study was aimed to find the indications for self-medication, and the reasons which arose them to go for self-medication, to seek medical advice after the self-medication and for not taking self-medication.

A cross sectional, descriptive, questionnaire-based study was conducted among first, second, and third year nursing students of College of Nursing, Jaffna. The SPSS 16 was used to analyze the data.

Among the 185 students, 83.3% have the self-medication practice. Among them, 85.7% (n=132) were female and 14.3% (n=22) male, and the mean age is 24.6±1.7 years. Indications for the self-medication practice included Infection 65.6%, headache 62.3%, Pain 61.7%, and fever 60.4%. The reasons for opting for self-medications included previous experience of self-medication (81.2%), and get emergency relief from the illness (50.6%). 26% (n=40) sought medical advice after self-medication. The main reasons for seeking subsequent medical advice were “problem may be serious” (50%), “symptoms were not reduced” (45%), and “symptoms were worsened” (37.5%). 16.7% of the study population did not practice self-medication. Major reasons for not practicing self-medications were “using self-medication is dangerous” (67.7%), “there is risk of adverse effects” (61.3%), and there is “risk of misdiagnosis” (51.6%).

Practice of self-medication fairly common among nursing students in Northern part of Sri Lanka which is a common finding in rest of the World, too.

Keywords: Fever, Head-ache, Pain, Self-medication.

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