

## 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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