

Prevalence and Reasons for Self-Medication with Antibiotics among the Students in a Private Institute, Sri Lanka

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Background: A common human experience is coping with disorder or illness. However, the reaction of the person to such a condition is based on specific individual values and some other underlying factors that contribute to self-care or self-medication. As a result of the escalation of antibiotic self-medication practices, it has turned out to be fatal in terms of antibiotic resistance, which has led to increased awareness of the reasons that arise from self-medication.

Objectives: To find the prevalence of self-medication with antibiotics (SMA) and reasons for self-medication and to find the knowledge of SMA among the students in a private institute in Sri Lanka

Methods: The research was conducted as a descriptive cross-sectional study using a self-administered questionnaire. Data were collected among students in a private institute in Sri Lanka. The study sample consisted of 110 students who are following Diploma programs on Nursing, Biomedical Sciences, Physiotherapy, and Foundation programs. The sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique.

Results: The prevalence of SMA was much higher (n = 93, 84.5%). Around 23% (n = 25) of students who mentioned on SMA rarely visited a qualified medical practitioner. The reasons in favor of SMA were; quick relief (n = 28, 25.5%), convenience (n = 18, 16.4%), unwillingness to visit a doctor for minor illnesses (n = 41, 37.3%). Moreover, easy accessibility to medical stores (n = 56, 50.9%) and availability of medicines at home (n = 31, 28.2%) were seen as factors for SMA. More than 50% of the study participants had good knowledge on SMA such as; antibiotic resistance, usage of antibiotics for the recovery of viral infections, and speed of recovery of cold and cough.

Conclusions: Though most students have good knowledge on SMA, there is a high prevalence of SMA among the students. To prevent this problem, strict policies on the sale of medicines need to be put in place.

Keywords: *Antibiotics, Antibiotic resistance, Self-Medication*