



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Management

A RESEARCH STUDY ON THE PREFERENCE OF SELF MEDICATION OVER PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

KEY WORDS: Self-medication, Prescription Drugs, Otc Drugs

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ABSTRACT

Self-medication is a human behavior in which an individual uses a substance or any exogenous influence to self-administer treatment for physical or psychological ailments. The most widely self-medicated substances are over-the-counter drugs and dietary supplements. Self-medication, which can be defined as the use of medicine without any professional supervision. It aims to find out the preference of self-medication over prescription drugs and make public aware about its effects and side effects. People use it for the treatment of any disease symptoms or minor ailments by their self initiative. The most commonly available OTC medications are pain killers, cough and cold remedies, anti-allergy medicines, vitamins and energy tonics. Although these medications are considered risk free and useful for the treatment of common health problems, their excessive use can also lead to serious side effects and unfavorable reactions. The percentage of self-medication might be changes with locality and region. Prevalence of self-medication is high in professional students. Many of the national and international journals on the self-medication were reviewed for their findings and report on different parameters. There are several drug stores, which provide the medicine without any prescription and its percentage is increasing day to day in India. Presently the frequency is high of self-medication by the young ones and literate people who do not have much time to go to physician. This review concludes the benefit (when drug is used in limit and its use, characteristics are known), drawback (when people have no idea about its use and limitations) of drugs and their safe use.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that self-medication has an important role to play in health care and, with the continued improvement in people's education, general knowledge and socio-economic status, self-medication has been successfully integrated into many health care systems throughout the world.

Self-medication products are those not requiring a medical prescription and which are produced, distributed and sold to consumers for use on their own initiative. Responsible self-medication can be used to prevent and treat symptoms and ailments that do not need medical consultation or oversight. This reduces pressure on medical services, especially when these are limited. For those populations living in rural or remote areas where access to medical services may be difficult, patients are able to control their own conditions to a greater extent. Only if the condition fails to respond, persists, or becomes more severe will the patient need to seek professional medical care.

Other factors have also contributed to prescription drugs being deregulated to over-the-counter (OTC) sale and new drugs with specific pharmacological action have been successfully reclassified from prescription to non-prescription status in many countries. For example, in the United States of America, products containing over 80 active ingredients of different therapeutic groups were switched from prescription-only to OTC status between 1976 and 2000. In many cases, restrictions imposed on reimbursement of prescription drugs have provided the impetus for authorities to evaluate and deregulate self-medication products to OTC status.

Although many countries categorize medicines as either OTC or prescription-only, research data indicate that sale of self-prescription products (i.e. buying prescription-only drugs without a prescription) is far more common than sale of OTC drugs. It is a reality that medical personnel are in very short supply in many parts of the world and legislation is lacking. Also, the cost and time of visiting a licensed medical practitioner may seem prohibitive for many patients if they do not consider the illness or condition serious enough.

Advantages of Self Medication

- Help to prevent and treat symptoms and ailments that do not require a doctor.
- Reduce the pressure on medical services where health care personnel are insufficient.

- Increase the awareness of health care to populations living in rural or remote areas.
- Enable patients to control their own chronic conditions.
- Hay fever, headache, indigestion, mouth ulcer, nausea, cough, acne, allergic conjunctivitis can be treated by self medication.
- For healthcare systems as it facilitates better use of clinical skills, increases access to medication and may contribute to reduce prescribed drug costs associated with publicly funded health programs.

Disadvantages of Self Medication

- Self medication is associated with risks such as misdiagnosis, use of excessive drug dosage, prolonged duration of use, drug interactions and poly pharmacy.
- Paracetamol, an antipyretic and analgesic in large doses can cause liver failure.
- Paracetamol toxicity is, by far, the most common cause of acute liver failure.
- Valsartan is an anti-hypertensive drug. It is highly effective when used in recommended quantities. The main consideration is the over usage of the drug may cause hypotension, which may eventually lead to heart failure and also hepatic and renal failure.
- The diagnosis may be wrong.
- The drugs may cause side effects.
- Financial losses – delayed recovery is ultimately more costly.

Characteristics of self-medication

Self-medication involves the use of medicinal products by the consumer to treat self-recognized disorders or symptoms, or the intermittent or continued use of a medication prescribed by a physician for chronic or recurring diseases or symptoms. In practice, it also includes use of the medication of family members, especially where the treatment of children or the elderly is involved.

In order to use a non-prescription product safely and effectively, the consumer must perform a number of functions normally carried out by a physician treating a patient with a prescription drug. These functions include accurate recognition of the symptoms, setting of therapeutic objectives, selection of a product to be used, determination of an appropriate dosage and dosage schedule, taking into account the person's medical history, contraindications, concomitant diseases and concurrent

medications, and monitoring of the response to the treatment and of possible adverse effects.

In the case of non-prescription medicinal products, all of the information required to permit safe and effective use must come from the labelling material, patient information texts, the individual's previous personal experience, various sources of information in the media, advertising, and advice given by health care professionals.

Pharmacists in particular can play a key role in giving advice to consumers on the proper and safe use of medicinal products intended for self-medication. It is important, therefore, to take this role into account both in their training and in practice.

The rapid development of new technology, and especially the Internet and related communication systems, has opened up new possibilities for searching for information. This may eventually offer important new channels for the dissemination of knowledge on medicinal products, their characteristics and proper use in self-medication, although the quality of information may vary.

OBJECTIVE

- _ To study the prevalence and usage of self-medication over the prescription drugs
- _ To find out which age group people are more prone to self-medication.
- _ To estimate the percentage of people preferring the self-medication and for what conditions they will prefer the self-medication over prescription medicines.

RESEARCH DESIGN/METHODLOGY :

A secondary research was performed initially in which the data available on various components involved in the Preference of self medication was collected. This illustrated the impact of the preference of medication.

Primary research was conducted with the help of a Survey of different people.

The survey was conducted online which included 105 respondents. A structured Questionnaire was used to collect the primary data.

Structured, open and close ended questions were included. Data collected was compiled for analysis and the observations are discussed.

- _ Research type was both Quantitative and Qualitative.
- _ Data was collected using Structured Questionnaire both open ended and close ended.
- _ Online survey was the mode of data collection using Google Docs.
- _ Random Sampling was done to collect the responses.
- _ Target respondents were people of all age group.
- _ Responses were collected from 105 respondents

A two-step procedure is adopted.

An **Exploratory Research** was done initially to identify the various factors affecting for the preference of self-medication. The key reason for conducting an exploratory research was that the study aimed at get an idea that which age group and what all the factors affecting are effecting the preference of self-medication. A primary research –questionnaire was used to collect the relevant data.

This was followed by a **Descriptive Research**, which helped to identify what percentage of people are preferring self-medication. The survey method was adopted. A questionnaire was used for this purpose.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

This phase involved the design of the questionnaire on the basis of key factors identified the preference of medication. Research problems were listed and then information needed was identified. The questions were then prepared in order to fulfill the

information requirements as identified earlier.

Structured questionnaire was designed in order to reduce the difficulty of the respondent while answering the questions.

Our target population involves Higher grade officers (Engaged in Management, Planning, Research or Planning), Lower grade office workers (engaged in supervision or ordinary office work), workers (In industry, Agriculture, Distribution and services), and College students. This study was aimed at different age groups residing anywhere in Hyderabad.

FINDINGS

A survey was conducted to collect primary responses for the present study. Using convenience sampling technique, responses were collected from 105 participants in different age-groups during 25 days period in Hyderabad. Following are some of the findings.

Gender	Responses
Males	48
Females	57

Inference:

- 48% of responses are from the Male Gender.
- 57% of responses are from the female Gender.

Age-Group:

Age Group	Responses
Below 20	8
Between 21-40	85
Between 41-60	9
Above 60	3

Inference:

- 8 % of the Responses are of the age group below 20.
- 85.02% of the Responses are of the age group between 21-40.
- 9% of the Responses are of the age group between 41-60.
- 3.07% of the Responses are of the age group above 60.

3. In a month how many times do you visit pharmacy?

Options	Responses
Once	39
Twice	30
Thrice	9
Others	27
	6 rarely, 4none, depends on situation

Inference:

- 39% of the responses visit pharmacy once per month.
- 30% of responses visit pharmacy twice per month.
- 9% of responses visit pharmacy thrice per month.
- 27% of responses will visit pharmacy rarely or sometimes, depends on the situation.

4. Do you prefer Self Medication?

Options	Response
Yes	64
No	41

Inference:

- 61% of the responses mostly preferring the self-medication on OTC drugs like anti pyretic, anti-bacterial, anti allergic drugs.
- 39% of the responses are not preferring the self-medication out of the 105 responses.

5. Do you consult doctor whenever you fall ill?

Options	Responses
Always	31
Never	2
Rarely	16
Sometimes	55

Inference:

- 55% of Responses, Always consult doctor whenever they fall

- ill.
- 31% of Responses, Never consult doctor whenever they fall ill.
- 2% of Responses consult doctor Rarely whenever they fall ill.
- 16% of Responses consult doctors sometimes whenever they fall ill.

6. If yes, In what condition do you consult doctor?

Most of the responses have been mentioned that in major disease conditions like Diabetic, Hypertension gynecological, gastric conditions people are preferring the doctor consultancy. And minor people are preferring in all conditions of illness and prone of diseases.

7. Do you follow same prescription every time when you fall ill without consulting doctor?

Options	Responses
Yes	65
No	40

Inferences:

- 62% of responses will follow same prescription every time when they fall ill without consulting doctor.
- 38% of responses are not following same prescription every time when they fall ill without consulting doctor.

8. If Yes, In which condition do you prefer the same prescription?

Most of the people are preferring the same prescription when fell ill in minor conditions and also with same cause of diseases.

9. Do you know self-medication may be harmful?

Options	Responses
Yes	98
No	7

Inferences:

- .97% Responses are know the self-medication is harmful for health.
- .3% Responses does not know the self-medication is harmful for health

10. If yes, still do you prefer self-medication?

Options	Responses
Yes	48
No	50

Inferences:

- 48% Responses are preferring Self Medication
- 50% Responses are Not Preferring Self Medication

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, self-medication can facilitate access to medicines and reduce health care costs. But more specific studies are needed to evaluate the impact and role of self-medication in the diversity of settings of different health care sectors. The combined efforts of industry and regulators must meet the expectations of consumers by providing products which are safe, effective, good value for money, and accompanied by complete and relevant information. High ethical standards should be applied to the provision of information, promotional practices and advertising. The content and quality of such information and its mode of communication remains a key element in educating consumers in responsible self-medication.

In a nutshell as a whole according to this survey 57% of responses are from the female Gender. Majority of the responses are from age group of between 21-40.

Most of the responses are visiting pharmacy only once or twice in a month and also depends on situation based on the requirement of the need. And 50 % are preferring self-medication even though 97% people are know that self-medication is harmful.

This is by 55% responses always consult doctor whenever they fall ill. Whereas, 30% Responses are never following the same

prescription in a month. 62% of responses will follow same prescription every time when they fall ill without consulting doctor for the minor conditions and also with same cause of disease.

And they prefer self-medication only for the minor conditions like anti pyretic anti biotic, Anti Allergic, etc.,

Most of the responses have been mentioned that for major disease conditions like Diabetic, Hypertension gynecological, gastric conditions people are preferring the doctor consultancy. And minor people are preferring in self-medication in all conditions of illness and prone of diseases.

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