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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

**EVALUATION OF THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE OF SELF-MEDICATION AMONG SECOND YEAR B.Sc NURSING STUDENTS**Raut P<sup>1</sup>, Vamsi D<sup>1</sup>, Rao BV<sup>2</sup>.

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**ABSTRACT:**

**Introduction-** This study was undertaken to determine the knowledge, attitude and practice of self-medication among second-year nursing students of the NRIIMS, Visakhapatnam.

**Materials & methods:** This was an anonymous, questionnaire-based, descriptive study. A prevalidated questionnaire, containing open-ended and close-ended questions, was administered to the subjects. Data were analyzed using MS-Excel and the results were expressed as counts and percentages. **Results:** Out of the 35 respondents, everyone responded with one or the other drug. The respondents' knowledge about appropriate self-medication was poor, but knowledge of the benefits and risks of self-medication was adequate. The respondents found self-medication to be time-saving, economical, convenient and providing quick relief in common illnesses. Important disadvantages of self-medication mentioned were the risk of making a wrong diagnosis, inappropriate drug use and adverse effects. The majority (40%) of the respondents had a positive attitude favoring self-medication. The most common indications for self-medication were to relieve the symptoms of headache (31.43%), fever (31.43%), cough & cold (22.83%). Analgesics () were the most common drugs used for self-medication. Knowledge about appropriate self-medication was adequate, attitude towards self-medication was positive, and the practice of self-medication was common and often inappropriate.

**Key words:** Self medication, questionnaire-based study.

**INTRODUCTION**

Self-medication involves the use of medicinal products by the individuals to treat self-recognized disorders or symptoms, or the intermittent or continuous use of a medication prescribed by a physician for chronic or recurring diseases or symptoms.<sup>1</sup> Self-medication involves acquiring medicines without a prescription, resubmitting old prescriptions to purchase medicines, sharing medicines with relatives or members of one's social circle or using leftover medicines stored at home.<sup>2</sup> Self-medication thus forms an integral part of self-care, which can be defined as the primary public health resource in the health care system. It includes self-medication, non-drug self-treatment, social support in illness, and first aid in everyday life.<sup>1</sup> Use of self-medication is highly prevalent in both urban and rural community varying from 32.5% to 81.5 %.<sup>3-5</sup>

The practice of self medication in the general population in the form of OTC (over the counter) drugs have been on a rapid rise. Unaware of the appropriate drugs for the particular illnesses, their doses, and adverse effects, the misuse of medications as prescribed by the pharmacist, or a family member, or anyone in general may lead to such people literally playing with their lives at their own mercy. But with illiteracy, there is no stop to this. On the contrary, the situation is entirely different in the case of medico/dental or nursing students. As soon as these students enter their second year, they have to study the

details of various drugs, the diseases where they can be administered, the side effects, the contraindications and their drug interactions in the subject of pharmacology. On one hand, students become more and more cautious in practicing self medication, knowing that irrational and inappropriate usage of them might be more harmful than useful, so they, even in situations of minor illness prefer taking any medication only after consultation from a qualified practitioner. On the other hand they may become confident and in most cases, overconfident, regarding their "BOOKISH" knowledge and may start implementing self care. They may either become successful in this attempt boosting up their confidence levels, hence encouraging them for its continued use or even over use, or may suffer such setbacks leading to a detrimental health or a diseased state.

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There is a paucity of studies on self medication among nursing students. This study aims at assessing the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of self medication and the reason for self medication among second year B.Sc. Nursing students of a private nursing college, attached to a Medical college in Visakhapatnam.

#### MATERIALS & METHODS:

This study was an anonymous, questionnaire based survey. It was undertaken in the month of April 2014. A self developed, prevalidated questionnaire was used. The study population comprised of second year B.Sc Nursing students of a private nursing college attached to a medical college in Visakhapatnam.

As the batch comprised only of girls there was no difference based on gender. The mean age of the students was 19 years ( $SD \pm 0.56$ ). A brief description of the nature of the study and the procedure of completing the questionnaire was explained to them, the time given for filling up the form (Questionnaire) was half an-hour.

The survey was descriptive and data was summarized as counts and percentage. MS Excel was used for data analysis.

#### RESULTS

Out of 35 students, all responded (100%). Table 1 shows the source of information regarding drugs. The important source of information for self medication was INTERNET, showing the widespread use of internet among students.

The most common condition/symptoms for self medication in students were fever (31.43%) as well as headache, bodyache & toothache (31.43%) followed by common cold (22.83%). The most commonly used drugs for self medication were analgesics followed by antipyretics.

About 66% of the students opined in favor of self medication. Most common reason for favoring self medication were knowledge gaining (42.86%) followed by increase in self confidence (34.29%).

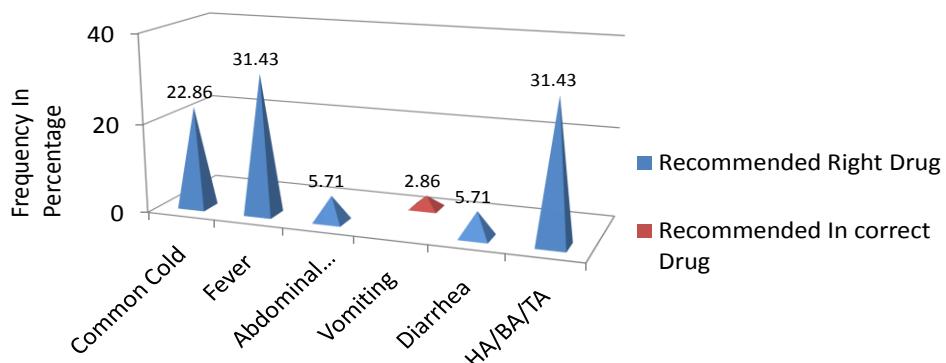
Table No.2 shows that out of 35 respondents 23 i.e. 65.71% of students were aware of adverse effects of drugs used for self medication.

TABLE 1: SHOWING SOURCE OF INFORMATION REGARDING DRUGS (N = 35)

SOURCE OF INFORMATION	NO	PERCENTAGE
Television	03	8.57
Inter Net	18	51.43
Print Media	10	28.57
Friends/Relatives	00	00.0
Past Exposures	04	11.43
Total	35	100.0

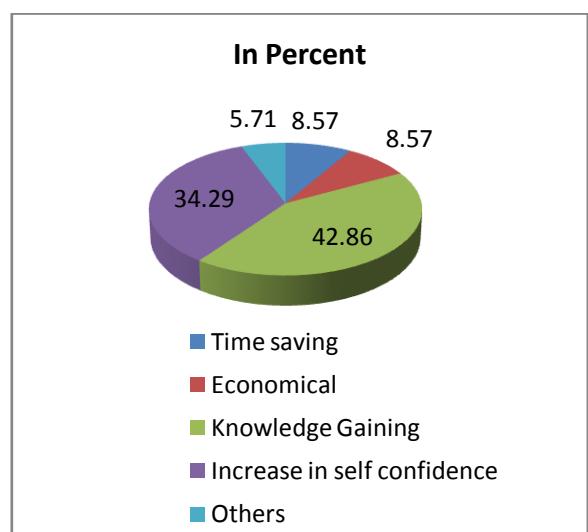
Source of information about use of drugs through internet is 51 percent followed by 29 percent of students have the knowledge from print media.

## DISEASE FOR WHICH MEDICATION WAS SOUGHT



HA/BA/TA = HEAD ACHE/BODY ACHE/TOOTH ACHE

Figure 1



**Figure 2: Forty two percent of students attributed that it is knowledge gaining followed by 34.29 percent attributed that it increase self confidence.**

**TABLE 2: SHOWING REASONS AGAINST SELF MEDICATION (N= 35)**

Reasons against practice of self medication	No
1.Risk of Adverse effects	23 (65.71)
2.Risk of wrong diagnosis	07 (20.00)
3.Risk of dependence	05 (14.29)
<b>Total</b>	<b>35 (100.0)</b>

Sixty six percent of students expressed it is risk of adverse effects followed by 20 percent of students attributed for as wrong diagnosis.

## DISCUSSION

The International Pharmaceutical Federation defines self-medication as the use of non-prescription medicines by people on their own initiative.<sup>6</sup> Self-medication is considered an element of self-care.<sup>7</sup> Self-care, including self-medication, has been a feature of healthcare for many years and people have always been keen to accept more personal responsibility for their health status.<sup>6</sup> The present study was conducted to evaluate the practices, attitude and perception of self-medication among nursing students. The prevalence of self-medication in our study was found to be 100%.

In studies conducted within India, the prevalence of self-medication among the medical students was shown to be ranging between 57.1% and 92%<sup>8-10</sup> Other studies on Indian students from non-medical background showed a prevalence of 80.1% in Tamil Nadu<sup>11</sup> and 87% in Uttar Pradesh.<sup>12</sup> In studies conducted in developing countries, the prevalence of self-medication was shown to be 25.4% and 43.2% in Ethiopia<sup>13,14</sup>, 51% in Slovenia<sup>15</sup>, 55.3% in Pakistan<sup>16</sup>, 55% in Egypt<sup>17</sup>, 56.9% in Nigeria<sup>18</sup> and 80.9% in Malaysia.<sup>19</sup>

In our study the most common reason for self-medication reported by a large number of participants was that it increases the knowledge regarding drugs and their use. However, in a study from Tamil Nadu<sup>11</sup> most students practiced self-medication as it was time saving, whereas in Punjab<sup>20</sup> the most common reason for self-medication was for quick relief.

Antipyretics & analgesics were the most common class of drugs self-medicated by majority of the participants in our study. Paracetamol and other types of NSAIDs were the most common type of analgesics used for self-medication. These results are similar to other studies conducted in other countries.<sup>23-27</sup> However, in studies from Iran<sup>21</sup>, Mozambique<sup>22</sup>, Pakistan<sup>16</sup>, and Egypt<sup>22</sup> analgesics were the most common group of drugs self-medicated. Fever was the most common indication for self-medication in our study which was similar to observations made in Tamil Nadu<sup>16</sup>. However, in studies from Western<sup>8</sup> and Southern part of India<sup>10</sup>, cough & cold was the most common symptom for self-medication. A study from Ethiopia<sup>13</sup> reported fever as the most common symptom for self-medication. In the present study 57% of the participants felt that self-medication was part of self-care which was higher to that reported in studies from Ethiopia<sup>14</sup> and Karachi.<sup>16</sup> More than 50% of the participants wished to continue with self-medication/start self-medication.

Regarding a change in attitude about self medication same results were obtained i.e. 45% of the students were not in favour to change their attitude about self medication whereas 40% were in favour of change in their attitude towards self medication.

More than 65% of respondents were aware of the adverse affects associated with self-medication as compared to just above 30% in the study by Badiger et al<sup>10</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The study showed that nursing students after studying second year subjects (especially Pharmacology) become more aware about drugs, their uses, adverse effects and contraindications. This helped them practice self medication. However, even though most of the students still feared having adverse effects due to self medication, yet not many had any experience. This promoted their practice of self medication.

Analgesics were the most commonly used drugs. It would be interesting to evaluate the changes in self medication pattern while students progress through their future nursing course.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to self medication practices among second year B.Sc nursing students only. It did not extend to other batches of B.Sc nursing students. Also the strength of the particular batch on which the study was conducted was only 42, out of which only 35 responded (as 7 students on that day of study were absent). This limitation, however, does not affect the validity of the results with regard to the parameters assessed.

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## DISCLOSURE

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