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Prevalence of Self Medication Practices and it's Associated Factors among the Patients of Selected Hospitals of Guwahati, Assam: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract: ***Background: Living with diseases and ailments is challenging, as it interferes with physical, mental, and social functions and thus greatly affects a person's quality of life. Several medications are used without a proper prescription by the people very often. Studies shows that medicine related problems like headache, gastro-intestinal problems, skin rash, kidney disease, etc, can be as high as 41% in patients who self-medicate. Objectives: 1) To assess the prevalence of self medication practices among patients of selected hospitals of Guwahati, Assam. 2) To assess the associated factors of self medication practices among patients of selected hospitals of Guwahati, Assam. Methods and Materials: A descriptive research design was used to accomplish the objectives. Study was undertaken among 120 patients of selected hospitals of Guwahati, Assam by using purposive sampling technique. Modified health promotion model was used as conceptual framework. Semi structured tools were used to assess the prevalence of self medication practices and it's associated factors among patients. Results: Out of 120 of patients demographic results shows that 35(28.3%) of the respondents were aged between 19 – 29 years, 61(50.9%) were male, 78(65%) were residing in urban area, 60(50%) were graduates, 35(29.2%) were private employees, 45(37.5%) had monthly family income of Rs.27654-46089, 97(80.8%) were married, 76(78.4%) were staying together, 90(75%) did not have the presence of health care professional in the family, 10(33.3%) had the presence of doctors and nurses in their family, 68(56.7%) did not have the health insurance, 76(63.3%) had previous information regarding self medication, 39(51.3%) had family/relatives as source of information and 107(89.2%) had the accessibility to medical services. Among practice, the result shows that out of 120 patients, 97(80.8%) had practiced self medication. Among 97, 41(42.3%) had practice self medication 2-5 times, 87 (89.7%) had the presence of common drugs at home, 36(37.1%) had continued self medication for 1 day. 64(65.9%) had consumed tablet as a form of self medication, 25(25.8%) had practiced self medication for gastric problems, 33(34%) had used gastric medications as the most commonly used for self medication, 50 (51.5%) had used to request for medications from store by mentioning the name of the drug, 79 (81.4%) had not encountered any adverse reactions because of self medications, 72(74.2%) had not read instructions which are present at the back or with the medication pack, 53(54.6%) were cured of the symptoms when practiced self medications most of the times, 52(53.6%) had sought the medical consultations when self medication failed and 67(69.1%) had recommended self medications to their family and friends. In associated factors of self medication, out of 97 patients 28(28.9%) had taken self medication due to the mild nature of the illness, 43(44.3%) were self influenced to take medicines, 45(46.4%) were at a distance of <½ hour distance from the available health facilities and their home, 79(81.4%) had followed self medications with the help of a previous prescription, 56(57.7%) had not frequently fall sick due to minor illnesses, 74(76.3%) were exposed to medical conditions which helped them to take self medications and 84(86.6%) were not getting medicines for free of cost. Conclusion: Through this study, the investigator concluded that there is prevalence of self medication practice among respondents, majority of the population practiced self medication and recommends self medicating to others. Health education of the public and regulation of pharmacies is necessary in limiting the self- medication practices.***

Keywords: Prevalence, self medication practices, associated factors, patients.

1. Introduction

Self medication as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), is the use of medicinal products to treat self-diagnosed disorders or symptoms, or the intermittent or continued use of a medication prescribed for chronic or recurring diseases or symptoms. [1]

Self medication can give rise to various side effects .Some common examples of mild adverse effects related to drugs include: constipation, skin rash or dermatitis, diarrhoea, dizziness, drowsiness, dry mouth, headache, insomnia, nausea. Examples of more serious effects include: suicidal thoughts, abnormal heart rhythms, internal bleeding and cancer.[2] In more severe cases, some medications cause a chemical reaction as they expire, which can be dangerous if consumed.[3]

According to various studies, the global prevalence rate of self-medication ranges from 11.2% to 93.7%, depending on the target population and country. Potential risks of self-medication practices include: incorrect self-diagnosis, delays in seeking medical advice when needed, infrequent but severe adverse reactions, dangerous drug interactions, incorrect manner of administration, incorrect dosage, incorrect choice of therapy, masking of a severe disease and risk of dependence and abuse. [4]

In developing countries like India, easy availability of a wide range of drugs coupled with inadequate health services results in increased proportions of drugs being used as self-medication. Barriers to healthcare access, lack of time, difficulties in securing a medical consultation due to administrative delays, and economic factors were the

reasons to practice self-medication. Other reasons include easy access: Purchase of medicines from several medical stores, which provide the medicine without any prescription, fragmented healthcare system, waiting time, healthcare cost and lack of awareness.[5]

Objectives:

1) To assess the prevalence of self medication practices among patients of selected hospitals of Guwahati, Assam.
2) To assess the associated factors of self medication practices among patients of selected hospitals of Guwahati, Assam.

2. Research Methodology

Research Approach: Quantitative research design

Research Design: Descriptive research design

Research Variables: Self medication practices and associated factors.

Demographic Variables: Age, gender, educational status, income, marital status, occupation, residence, presence of health care professional in the family, previous information, source of information, health insurance.

Population: Patients

Target Population: Patients between the age group of 20-59 years.

Sample: Patients between the age group of 20-59 years in selected hospitals of Guwahati, Assam who fulfilled the inclusion criteria.

Sample Size: 120

Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling technique.

Description of Tools

Semi structured tools:
The tool used for the study consisted of three sections, it includes-
Section I: Demographic data
Section II: Semistructured questionnaire on prevalence of self medication practices.
Section III: Semi structured questionnaire on associated factors of self medication practices.

Technique: Self report

3. Results

Section- I

Table I: Frequency and percentage distribution of demographic variables of patients, N=120

Demographic Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)		
19 – 29	35	28.3
30 – 39	32	26.7
40 – 49	30	25.0
50 – 59	24	20.0
Gender		
Male	61	50.9
Female	58	48.3
Transgender	1	0.8
Residence		
Urban	78	65.0
Rural	42	35.0
Educational status		
Undergraduate	27	22.5
Graduate	60	50.0
Post graduate	33	27.5
Occupation		
Private employee	35	29.2
Govt. employee	33	27.5
Daily wage earner	16	13.3
Unemployed	30	25.0
Retired	6	5.0
Monthly family income in Rs.		
≤9226	10	8.3
9232 – 27648	40	33.3
27654 – 46089	45	37.5
46095 – 68961	15	12.5
68967 – 92185	6	5.0
≥184376	4	3.3
Marital status		
Married	97	80.8
Unmarried	23	19.2
If married		

Demographic Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Widow / Widower	10	10.3
Divorced	6	6.2
Staying together	76	78.4
Staying separate	5	5.2
Presence of Health Care Professional in the family?		
Yes	30	25.0
No	90	75.0
If yes mention the category		
Doctors	5	16.7
Nurses	10	33.3
Pharmacists	10	33.3
Others	5	16.7
Do you have health insurance?		
Yes	52	43.3
No	68	56.7
Previous information regarding self medication?		
Yes	76	63.3
No	44	36.7
If yes, what was the source of information		
Friends	17	22.4
Family/Relatives	39	51.3
Mass media	6	7.9
Health professional	14	18.4
Do you have accessibility to medical services?		
Yes	107	89.2
No	13	10.8

The table I portrays that out of 120 most of the patients, 35(28.3%) were aged between 19 – 29 years, 61(50.9%) were male, 78(65%) were residing in urban area, 60(50%) were graduates, 35(29.2%) were private employees, 45(37.5%) had monthly family income of Rs.27654-46089, 97(80.8%) were married, 76(78.4%) were staying together, 90(75%) did not have the presence of health care professional in the family, 10(33.3%) had the presence of doctors and nurses in their family, 68(56.7%) did not have the health insurance, 76(63.3%) had no previous information regarding self medication, 39(51.3%) had family/relatives as source of information and 107(89.2%) had the accessibility to medical services.

Section II

N=120

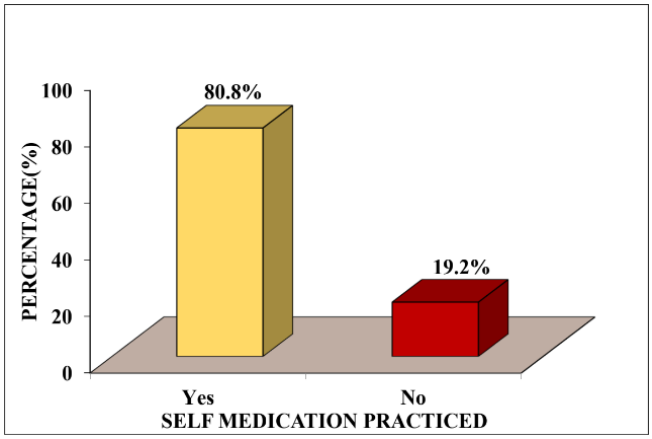

Figure I: Percentage Distribution of Self Medication Practices among Patients

The figure shows that, out of 120 patients majority 97(80.8%) of the patients had practiced self medication and 23(19.2%) had not practiced self medication.

Table II: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Self Medication Practices among Patients, n=97

If practiced self medication, how many times have you practiced it?	Frequency (f)	Percentage %
1 time	31	32.0
2 – 5 times	41	42.3
5 – 8 times	7	7.2
>8 times	18	18.5
Is there any presence of common drugs at your home?		
Yes	87	89.7
No	10	10.3
What was the duration of continuing self medication?		
For 1 day	36	37.1
For 2 days	23	23.7
For 3 days	22	22.7
More than 4 days	16	16.5
What is the form of medication that you usually consume?		
Oral mediations		
Tablet	64	65.9
Capsule	13	13.5
Suspension	4	4.1
Ointments	9	9.3
Others	7	7.2
For which conditions do you mostly practice self medication?		
Headache	21	21.6
Fever	11	11.3
Gastrointestinal problems	25	25.8
Common cold and cough	10	10.3
Prevention of pregnancy	5	5.2
Periods of pain	7	7.2
Others	18	18.6
Which category of drugs which is most commonly used for self medication?		
Painkillers (Examples-Zerodol,	21	21.6

Paracetamol)		
Antibiotics (Examples-Azithromycin, Amoxiclav)	12	12.4
Gastric medications (Examples-Pantop, Rablet, Aciloc, Sucral)	33	34
Contraceptive pills (Examples-I-pill, Mala D, Mala N, Choice)	8	8.2
Fever medications (Examples-Dolo, Calpol)	18	18.56
Antidiarrheal (Examples-O2, Metrogyl, Norflox.)	5	5.15
Others	-	-
How do you usually request for medications from store?		
By mentioning the name of the drug	50	51.5
By mentioning the group to which the drug belongs, e.g. antacid	14	14.4
By telling the symptom of your illness	12	12.4
By showing old sample/package of the drug	9	9.3
By presenting piece of paper on which the name of the drug is written	7	7.2
By describing the shape or any other physical characteristics	5	5.2
Have you ever encountered any adverse reactions because of self medication?		
Yes	18	18.6
No	79	81.4
Do you read the instructions which are present at the back or with the medication pack?		
Yes	72	74.2
No	25	25.8
According to your experience, what were the outcomes of practicing self medications most of the times?		
Cured the symptoms	53	54.6
Fully cured the disease	27	27.8
Alleviated the symptoms	2	2.1
No benefit was experienced	15	15.5
What are the actions taken when self medication fails?		
Medical consultations is sought	52	53.6
Same drug is consumed repeatedly	14	14.4
Wait for the condition to resolve on its own	16	16.5
A new stronger medication is taken	15	15.5
Do you recommend self medication to your family and friends?		
Yes	67	69.1
No	30	30.9

The table II portrays that out of 120, 97(80.8%) patients had practiced self medication.

Among 97, 41(42.3%) had practiced self medication 2 – 5 times, 87(89.7%) had the presence of common drugs at home, 36(37.1%) had continued self medication for 1 day, 64(65.9%) had consumed tablet as a form of self medication, 25(25.8%) had practiced self medication for gastric problems, 33(34%) had used gastric medications as the most commonly used for self medication, 50(51.5%) had used to request for medications from store by mentioning the name of the drug, 79(81.4%) had not encountered any adverse reactions because of self medications, 72(74.2%) had not read instructions which are present at the back or with the medication pack, 53(54.6%) were cured of the symptoms when practiced self medications most of the times, 52(53.6%) had sought the medical consultations when self medication failed and 67(69.1%) had recommended self medications to their family and friends.

Section III

Table III: Frequency and percentage distribution of associated factors of self medication practices among patients
n = 97

ASSOCIATED FACTORS	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
What is the reason for taking self medication?		
Mild nature of illness.	28	28.9
Long distance of hospitals from home.	12	12.4
More amount of waiting time to visit physicians.	18	18.6
Unavailability of physicians	3	3.1
It is time saving	16	16.5
It is economical	10	10.3
Fear of getting diagnosed with serious illness	8	8.2
Others	2	2.1
Who has influences you to take medicines?		
Self influenced	43	44.3
Friend	6	6.2
Family	29	29.9
Pharmacist	9	9.3
Mass media	10	10.3
What is the distance between the nearest available health facilities and your home?		
<½ hour distance	45	46.4
½ - 1 hour distance	26	26.8
1 – 2 hours distance	16	16.5
>2 hours distance	10	10.3
Have you followed self medication with the help of a previous prescription?		
Yes	79	81.4
No	18	18.6
Do you frequently fall sick due to minor illnesses?		
Yes	41	42.3

ASSOCIATED FACTORS	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
No	56	57.7
Did you had previous exposure to medical conditions which helps you to take self medication?		
Yes	74	76.3
No	23	23.7
Are you getting medicines free of cost?		
Yes	13	13.4
No	84	86.6

The table III shows that most of the patients, 28(28.9%) had taken self medication due to the mild nature of the illness, 43(44.3%) were self influenced to take medicines, 45(46.4%) were at a distance of <½ hour distance from the available health facilities and their home, 79(81.4%) had followed self medications with the help of a previous prescription, 56(57.7%) had not frequently fall sick due to minor illnesses, 74(76.3%) were exposed to medical conditions which helped them to take self medications and 84(86.6%) were not getting medicines for free of cost.

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