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Views and perceptions of patients regarding antibiotic use without prescription

A. Aldumiji, A. Alsulami M. Bosaeed, H. Baz, J. Sobahi, W. Alsoraihi, M. Ali

College of Pharmacy, Umma Al-Qura University, Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

Introduction

Using antibiotic without prescription (AWP) is a common practice in Saudi Arabia. It has been associated with morbidity, mortality and bacterial resistance. There is now immense literature available exploring the views, perceptions and experiences of community pharmacists regarding dispensing AWP. It is important to understand this practice and factors leading to it from patient perspective.

Objectives

To explore views and perception of patients regarding the use of AWP.

Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional survey was designed and piloted to evaluate and assess the pattern of diseases, pattern of antibiotic use, antibiotic use for others and participants' knowledge of antibiotic use and resistance. Survey was conducted in Makkah, Jeddah and Taif, involved face-to-face interaction with participants and online option, and was available in Arabic and English languages.

Results

1826 participants responded to the survey - 59.2% had used AWP while only 34.2% participants sought medical advice before using antibiotics. Participants received AWP from community pharmacy (54%) with no counselling provided (35%). Only 11% pharmacists advised on completing antibiotic course. Most of the pharmacists did not refuse to dispense AWP (84%). Some participants had given AWP to children (22%) and given/encouraged other family members to use AWP (28%). More than half (58%) did not know about drug-food interaction with antibiotics. Majority of participants knew about antibiotic resistance (53%) and believed that it is harmful to use AWP (72%).

Conclusion

Strict measures are needed to restrict the sale of antibiotics from community pharmacy and more efforts should be employed in antibiotic awareness campaigns in the region focusing on advising the people regarding the hazards of self-treatment with antibiotics.

Globalhealthcareactivities@gmail.com