



Research Paper

## SELF-MEDICATION PRACTICE AND RELATED KNOWLEDGE AMONG STUDENTS OF SELECTED NURSING INSTITUTIONS, ERNAKULAM

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Study to assess the self-medication practice and related knowledge among nursing students was conducted among 200 subjects using descriptive design. Subjects were selected through stratified random sampling technique from five selected nursing institutions at Ernakulam district of Kerala, India and prevalidated semistructured questionnaire related to various aspects of self-medication was used for data collection. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Self-medication was reported among 63% of the nursing students. The respondents who used self-medication found it to be using for minor ailments. The most common ailments for which self-medication was practiced include fever (58%) and pain (40%). Antipyretics (72%), analgesics (48%) and antacids (28%) were the most common self-medication medicines used. Of the respondents, 3% experienced adverse reactions as a result of self-medication practice. The present study reports that the prevalence of self-medication among nursing students was high and a significant number of students are unaware of the adverse effects of the medication that they themselves take and suggest to others. Therefore, potential problems of self-medication should be emphasized to the students.

**Keywords:** Self-medication, Self-medication pattern, Nursing students, Knowledge

### INTRODUCTION

Self-medication can be defined as obtaining and consuming drugs without the advice of a physician either for diagnosis, prescription or surveillance of treatment. Self-medication is a problem that exists world-wide. About 47.6% prevalence of self-medication has been reported in 2011 WHO survey. Prevalence of self-

medication in developing countries is in the range between 12.7% to 95%. Broader studies revealed that self-medication is commonly practiced by students especially those in the medical related courses. Nursing and midwifery students, on the other hand, will be expected to handle several types of medications as well as have easy access to drugs in their future practice. This can favor self prescription and self-medication.

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## MATERIALS AND METHODS

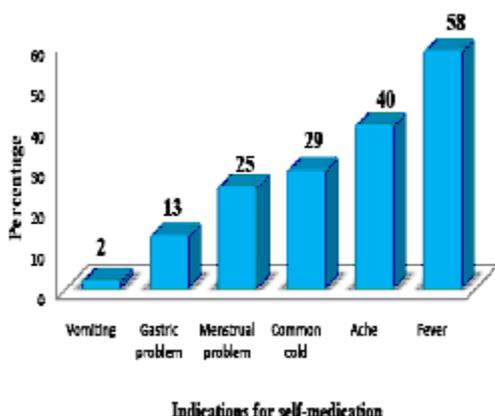
Quantitative research approach with descriptive design is used for the study. The study was conducted among nursing students of five selected nursing institutions of Ernakulam. A total of 200 subjects were selected by stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using prevalidated semi structured questionnaire related to various aspects of self-medication practice and its related knowledge.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

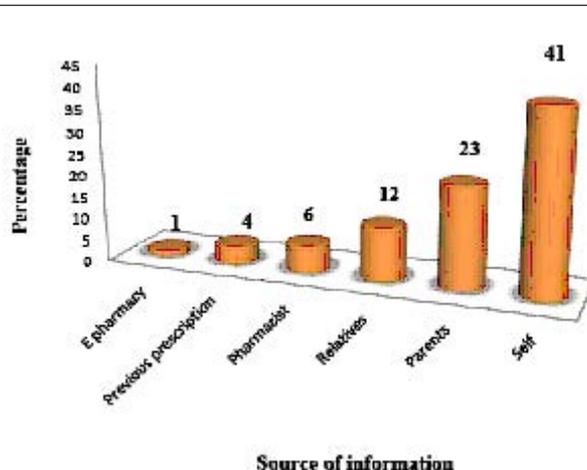
The study report that 63% of students practice self-medication and the main indication for practice is fever (58%), ache (40%) and common cold (29%) (Figure 1). Antipyretics (72%) and analgesics (48%) are the most commonly used medications.

The main source of information for self-medication practice is self (41%) followed by parents (23%) and the 75% who practiced self-medication obtained it from nearby pharmacy. (Figure 2). Most of the subjects (48%) justify the reason for self-medication as mild symptoms and prior experience (22%) (Figure 3).

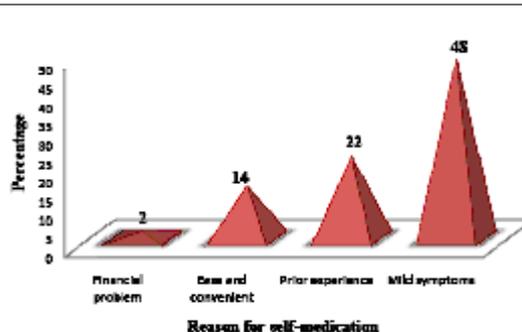
**Figure 1: Indications For Self-Medication**



**Figure 2: Source of Information**



**Figure 3: Reason for Self-Medication**



The data presented in Table 1 regarding the knowledge level of subject on self-medication indicate that out of the 200 subjects, majority (81.5%) have average knowledge, and none of the subjects have good knowledge on self-medication.

The  $\chi^2$  computed between knowledge on self-medication and self-medication practice among nursing students presented in Table 2 depicts that knowledge on self-medication has no significant association with their practice. This indicates that the practice of self-medication is independent of their knowledge. ( $\chi^2_{(1)} = 1.937, p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 1: Distribution of the Subject Based on Knowledge Level Regarding Self-medication**

Knowledge level	Self-Medication practice				Total	
	Yes		No			
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Poor	27	21.43	10	13.51	37	18.5
Average	99	78.57	64	86.49	163	81.5
Good	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	126	100	74	100	200	100

**Table 2: Association Between Knowledge and Practice of Self-medication**

Knowledge level	Self-medication Practice		Degree of freedom	$\chi^2$	p value
	Yes	No			
	Frequency	Frequency			
Poor	27	10	1	1.937 <sup>ns</sup>	0.113
Average	99	64			

Note:  $\chi^2_{(1)} = 3.84$ , ns – not significant at 0.05 level.

**Major Findings of the Study were**

- Majority 126 (63%) of the subjects practiced self-medication and majority (81.5%) had average knowledge, and none of the subjects have good knowledge on self-medication

This is an alarming data because those who practice self-medication did so without having adequate knowledge on this. Further, this is not ethical to practice self-medication without the prescription from an authorized person.

- The most commonly used drug were antipyretics (72%), followed by analgesics (48%), antacids (28%) and antibiotics (14%)
- The most common symptoms for which self-medication is practiced was fever (58%), followed by ache/pain (40%), common cold (29%) and menstrual problem (25%).

Among the study subject the most common medication taken was antipyretics and analgesics. This is in par with the symptom reported by subject as fever and ache.

- The source of information for most (41%) of subjects was, self followed by parents (23%) and relatives (12%) and majority of the subjects (75%) purchased medicine from the nearby pharmacy.
- The main reason for practicing self-medication is that they feel their symptoms as mild (48%) followed by prior experience (22%) of the subjects. Only 2% reported financial problem as reason for self-medication.

It is important to note that main source of information is self followed by parents. This data further warns about the danger because majority

of the self prescribers have only average knowledge and none of the parents or relatives who suggest medication are not health care professionals. Majority of the subjects get the medication from the nearby pharmacy. This data again is an eye opener for the drug centered department. Selling drugs without prescription is illegal. Government should take strict action against this practice.

- Knowledge on self-medication had no significant association with practice.
- There is significant association between knowledge and year of study, i.e., as the students go higher levels, their knowledge on self-medication also increases.

The reason could be because of their experience with administration of medication and clinical experience based on the scientific knowledge.

- Majority 141 (70.5%) of the subjects are in the age group of 18-20 years.

## CONCLUSION

The study findings showed that prevalence of self-medication is very high among the nursing students. There exist a wide gap between knowledge on self-medication and its practice. There are no subjects with good knowledge and majority had only average knowledge. This is an alarming situation which demands proper

education regarding risk of self-medication practice.

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