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Patient reasons for obtaining psychotropic medications without a prescription at retail pharmacies in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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People in developing countries are obtaining prescription-only medications from community pharmacies without seeking medical advice. Pharmacists are dispensing prescription-only medications in general without a prescription in Saudi Arabia. This is an observational, quantitative and cross-sectional study that was carried out from November 2014 to August 2015. When piloting the study, all retail pharmacy workers refused to collaborate as they were afraid of the legal consequences. Then, we started collecting convenient samples from internet users and visitors of some retail pharmacies, governmental and private psychiatric clinics. The study included Arabic speakers who are ≥ 18 years old, have used at least one psychotropic medication without a prescription in the past 4 weeks and lived in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. 302 out of 429 participants were included. The majority (31.8%) used Escitalopram and 38.7% used the psychotropic medication/s for more than a year. 552 medications were used by 302 participants with a mean of 1.83 medication per participant. Respondents reported taking the medications mainly to treat symptoms of "feeling sad or depressed" (57.6%) and "general anxiety" (41.4%). Family and friends were the most common source of information relied on by the respondents about the chosen medication (36.8%). 66.6% obtained the medication by asking the pharmacist its name. Among the reasons given for taking psychotropic medications without a prescription, (42.4%) felt that their symptoms were not serious enough to require the help of a psychiatrist. Using the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) and Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item (GAD-7) scales, the percentage of depression and anxiety among the participants were (46.0%) and (41.7%), respectively.

Biography

Ghaida AlAbidi is a fourth year medical student at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She is one of the authors of the paper, "Patient Reasons for Obtaining Psychotropic Medications without a Prescription at Retail Pharmacies in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia" which is under publishing process. She is interested in research and to advance her research skills.

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