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Irrational use and non-prescription sale of antibiotics in Ethiopia, a need for change: A case study conducted at Shambu General Hospital, Shambu, Ethiopia

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The sale of antibiotics without medical prescription has been observed in many countries. The practice is more pronounced in developing and low income countries where legislations and regulations are weak. In these countries, antibiotics are illegally purchased without medical prescriptions and very little effort has been made to tackle the situation. The role of pharmacists in contributing to healthcare remains debatable. In Ethiopia, there are deficiencies in the quality of current professional practice. Community pharmacists are now seen as retailers and businessmen rather than health care providers. Ethiopians are therefore left to accept the helpful and harmful practices such pharmacists. Self-medication with antibiotics is a universal problem and variations regarding such practices are obvious around the globe. The practice cuts across culture, gender, age, health status, social status, race and occupation. Irrational use of antibiotics increases the risk of bacterial resistance and adverse drug reactions. It has been found to produce various adverse effects in humans. It is the objective of this paper to discuss the irrational use and non-prescription sale of antibiotics in Ethiopia. It discusses the evidence, the concept of self-medication, resistance and interactions, legislation, probable solutions, changes in practice and the concept of sustainability which would help guarantee the appropriate sale and rational use of antibiotics in Ethiopia.

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