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Consequences of irrational self-medication practices among university students in UAE

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There is a high prevalence of self-medication practices among university students in United Arab Emirates (UAE). Although Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs do not need prescription, they are safe only when used with proper guidance and with pharmacist consultation. Improper use of Oral Non-Prescription Drugs (ONPD) leads to carelessness and which may further lead to serious consequences. The aim of this research is to identify the common practices among university students using ONPD and its consequences. A cross-sectional survey-based study was conducted from January to April 2014, among 2875 students in three randomly selected UAE universities. A structured and validated questionnaire was used to collect the responses of the students. SPSS version 20 was used to analyze the data. A majority of the participants were females (76.3%). The most common cause of using ONPD was found to be minor illness (78.7%). Analgesics/antipyretics were the common category of ONPD among the students (84.9%). More than one-third of participants (34.1%; 461 of 1348) had used more than one drug for treating a single symptom (polypharmacy). The major risk associated with the ONPD users were found to be belief of effectiveness of ONPD (OR = 0.348, 95% CI: .161-0.916, $p < 0.04$); frequency of use behavior (OR = 2.368, 95% CI: 1.615-3.472, $p < 0.001$); dose-seeking behavior (OR = 2.368, 95% CI: 1.615-3.472, $p < 0.00$), informal source of ONPD information (OR = 1.528, 95% CI: 1.096-2.130, $p < 0.02$) and self-care orientation (OR = 2.331, 95% CI: 1.602-3.392, $p < 0.001$). The irresponsible behaviour of self-medication is high among university students in UAE. There is a need for an educational intervention to motivate students to be use non-prescription drugs more wisely.

Biography

Khalid Awad Al-Kubaisi is a Post-graduate Researcher who is in his final year of PhD program in Public Health from Gloucestershire University, UK. He was awarded his Master's degree, (Excellent with First Honours) in Public Health (MPH) from Hamadan bin Mohamed Smart University, Dubai during the academic year 2010-2012. He attended his Undergraduate school at the University of Baghdad where he received his Bachelor's degree in Science of Pharmacy in 1996. He spent ten years working as a Pharmacist in UAE. His research interest is in self-medication practice and in the use of non-prescription drugs by university's students, for example, investigating students' behavior towards reading the drug information leaflets. Recently, he developed and evaluated an educational intervention designed for modifying university students' practice, knowledge, awareness and attitude in favor of responsible self-medication.

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