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Why not ask a pharmacist for advice? A survey of university students in United Arab Emirates

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Background & Aim: Pharmacist can answer many questions about medicines, recommend nonprescription drugs and discuss side effects of specific medications. However, there are no extensive studies, which have measured the prevalence of not seeking pharmacists' advice during purchasing Non-Prescription Drugs (NPD) and/or identified the reasons and the risk factors associated with this behavior among university students. Therefore, we attempted to fill the gap in the literature.

Methodology: A cross-sectional survey-based study among 2875 students in three randomly selected UAE universities. SPSS version 20 was used to analyze the data.

Results: Of 1348 participants reported using Oral NPD during the past three months before conducting the study, 24% of participants reported not asking the pharmacist for a medical advice when buying NPD. The survey has identified six risk factors: Participants usually do not read the drug information leaflets for the first time of NPD use had higher odd of not asking a pharmacist for advice than those who did (OR=2.647, 95% CI: 1.940-3.612, p value<0.001). High frequently drug-users of daily use had lower odd compared to low frequency users (OR=0.507, 95% CI: 0.270-0.949, p<0.05). Students from non-medical schools had lower odds of not asking pharmacists for medical advice compared to students from medical schools (OR=0.575, 95% CI: 0.421-0.786, p value<0.001). Furthermore, participants usually use leftover NPD than buying a new NPD is at risk of not asking pharmacist for a medical advice (OR=1.414, 95% CI: 1.029-1.944, p value<0.05). Participants usually ask family and a friend for information about NPD is also at risk of not asking pharmacist (OR =1.495, 95% CI: 1.130-1.979, p value<0.05). Poor to average self-reported health status was a risk factor for not asking pharmacist for an advice (OR =1.716, 95% CI: 1.174-2.510, p value<0.05).

Conclusion: There are a sizable proportion of university students that not seeking pharmacists' advice during purchasing NPD, but it is more serious issue when it comes to medical student. There is a need for raising students' awareness about the crucial role of pharmacists in self-care and self-medication. Pharmacists should be encouraged to provide point of sale consultations with customers regarding safe and effective drugs' use. Further studies are required to explore other reasons and risk factors.

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