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Awareness of prince Mohammad Bin Fahad University students toward the correct Use of antibiotics and the issue of antibiotic resistance

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Background & Aim: Misuse of antibiotics is a serious health issue in Saudi Arabia in which it leads to the development and acceleration of antibiotic resistance. Awareness and good practice of antibiotic usage have a great influence on the public health. The current study assesses antibiotic awareness among university students in Saudi Arabia, based on their knowledge about what antibiotics should be used for, how to use them correctly, as well as the issue of antibiotic resistance and how to address it.

Method: A cross-sectional study was designed, using a self-administered twenty-four item online questionnaire which was sent to all students of Prince Mohammad Bin Fahad University.

Results: A total of 320 students participated in the survey; of who 210 were females (65.6%) and 110 were males (34.4%). Only two-thirds of the students disclosed the use of antibiotics for bacterial infections. In addition, 50.0 – 57.5% of the students could not identify whether the common cold, fever, sore throat, skin infection and urine infection can be treated with antibiotics or not. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents knew how to correctly use antibiotics, as 84.1% of them revealed that they should follow the prescription of antibiotics exactly as directed by the doctor and not to discontinue the antibiotic course upon alleviation of the symptoms. Similarly, 73.4% of students revealed a high awareness level of the issue of antibiotic resistance and how to avoid it. However, around one-third of them thought that antibiotic-resistant bacteria cannot spread from one person to another.

Conclusion: It is essential to develop an educational intervention to improve the students' awareness of the specific conditions that can be treated with antibiotics. Additionally, students should understand that antibiotic resistance is only accelerated by the misuse of antibiotics, but it can actually affect anyone, of any age, in any country.

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