

Dangers of Self Medication and Prevention

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ABSTRACT

Self-medication is a human behavior in which an individual uses a substance or any exogenous influence to self-administer treatment for physical or psychological ailments. The most widely self-medicated substances are over-the-counter drugs used to treat common health issues at home, as well as dietary supplements. The adverse consequences of such practices should always be emphasized to the community and steps to curb it. Rampant irrational use of drugs without medical guidance may result in greater probability of inappropriate, incorrect, or undue therapy, missed diagnosis, delays in appropriate treatment, pathogen resistance, and increased morbidity. Some issues like Inaccurate Dosages, Undiagnosed Underlying Condition, Antibiotic Misuse, and Expired Medications etc, are often regular in self medication and are totally dangerous to individual's health. Major problems related to self-medication include wastage of resources, increased resistance of pathogens (which generally cause serious health hazards such as adverse reactions), prolonged suffering and drug dependence. Unawareness about safe and rational use of medicine may lead to serious consequences which is difficult to overcome. The adverse consequences of such practices should always be emphasized to the community and steps to curb it. Rampant irrational use of antibiotics without medical guidance may result in greater probability of inappropriate, incorrect, or undue therapy, missed diagnosis, delays in appropriate treatment, pathogen resistance, and increased morbidity. Keywords: Dangers, self medication, prevention.

INTRODUCTION

Taking over-the-counter or prescription medications without talking to a doctor first may seem to save you time and money, but it is much more costly to your health in the end. The effects of self-medication can be harmful and potentially life-threatening. According to doctors, self-medication is very dangerous disease which cannot let you to survive; Moreover, it becomes very difficult for them to diagnose the self-medication patients. When someone takes self-medication, usually takes more or less medicines than the recommended dosage. In certain cases they take drugs with toxic substances which are very harsh. Self-medication has harmful effects on health; today there is a list of drugs which are not allowed to be offered to the patients without medical prescription. Furthermore, self-medication is boosting rapidly and it is incumbent to inform the

people about the harmful consequences of self-medication. Both doctors and government can play a very positive role in eradicating self-medication [1] [2]. Government should update the list of drugs which should not be given without any medical prescription which will help us to prevent self-medication. People take drugs without the prescription of a doctor for a number of reasons; While some aim for a reduction in the time and cost of clinical consultation, others simply trivialize illnesses and resort to self-medication. Other factors could be due to personal insecurities and fear of job loss due to diagnosed disease, mental illness, quick relief of pain, depression or even ignorance [3].

Dangers of Self-Medication

Expired Medications; Medications have expiration dates that indicate when by when they should be taken to ensure

safety and potency [4]. Medications that have passed their expiration dates might not work as effectively or be safe to use. When you take prescription or over-the-counter medications that have expired, you are taking the risk of not receiving enough of a dose to relieve or manage your symptoms. In some medications, chemical reactions can occur as they expire, making them dangerous to consume. Always double check your medication labels before taking your medication [5] [6].

Undiagnosed Underlying Condition; Taking medicine to treat ongoing symptoms without seeing a doctor could mean that you are letting an underlying condition go undiagnosed. Symptoms like persistent fever and rash could be associated with underlying medical conditions that require proper diagnosis to be effectively treated. In some cases, such as diabetes or heart disease, letting symptoms go unchecked could increase your risk of developing serious complications [7]. If you have experienced a symptom (e.g. fever, rash, insomnia, vomiting, dizziness, nausea, headache, sinus pressure, etc.) for more than 5 days, see your doctor immediately [8].

Antibiotic Misuse; Antibiotics have the ability to destroy harmful bacteria, but their misuse can have dangerous effects. Taking antibiotics when you do not have a bacterial infection or illness can lead to . When this happens, bacteria develop the ability to resist the effects of antibiotics, which prevents them from working effectively [9]. The bacteria can then multiply, resulting in higher numbers of bacteria that are resistant to your medications. Bacteria can also share this resistance with other types of bacteria, including harmful and beneficial ones. When you have the common cold or another viral infection, for example, taking antibiotics for it will not get rid of the virus. Instead, it will cause beneficial bacteria to build up a resistance and share that resistance with any harmful bacteria that are present. Additionally, there are many different types of antibiotics developed to treat specific illnesses. If you take antibiotics

previously prescribed for a different condition, at best you won't get any better. At worst, you can make yourself severely ill and build antibiotic resistant bacteria that make it harder to cure you [10].

Mixing Medications; when you take multiple medications on your own, you run the risk of taking medications that should not be used together for safety reasons. For instance, taking Viagra and heart medications simultaneously can cause a massive drop in blood pressure and trigger a heart attack. Some medications can affect the potency of other drugs when mixed together. This can put your health at risk by letting your symptoms go untreated due to lowered drug potency. Always ask your pharmacist about any possible negative drug reactions [11] [12].

Inaccurate Dosages; The dangers of self-medication can be life-threatening when inaccurate dosages are taken. When you estimate your own dosage, you are at risk for taking enough to result in an accidental overdose. Conversely, if you take a dosage that is too small, it is not likely to be effective and you may become sicker [13]. This can result in taking additional dosages in order to manage or relieve your symptoms, which can also lead to an overdose. The practice of self-medication can, and does often, result in death. Your pharmacist and your physician are a team that's working together to help ensure your safety and maintain your health. Utilize that team by going to the doctor and communicating any concerns you have to your pharmacist—it could prevent serious complications, including death [14].

Some Preventive Measures

- Always seek medical attention whenever you fall ill from registered healthcare professionals. Buy medicines from the *Pharmacy and Poisons Board* licensed health facilities and ensure that you are only served by qualified personnel in these premises. Licensed personnel are required to display their

practicing license issued by the Board at all times

- Use all medicines as directed by a health professional
- Never share your prescription medications with others or use someone else's prescription medications
- Always store your medications securely to prevent others from using them and properly dispose off that are no longer in use.
- Be a good example to those around you by modeling these safe-medication taking practices and

discuss the dangers of misusing prescription drugs with your family, friends, colleagues, students or patients [15].

- In case you suffer any side effects or adverse reaction(s), get in touch with your healthcare professional immediately.
- The government and other regulatory bodies should supervise the sale of drugs by the wrong people in the country. They should ensure that they confiscate any drug sold on the roadside or by hawkers [16].

CONCLUSION

The misuse of drugs poses a serious risk to disease control and public health in general. Lack of knowledge in lay people and lack of attention of the public health researchers regarding not only self-medication but associated important problem like antibiotic resistance and potential adverse events deserves

immediate implementation public health programs for increasing awareness and importance of this issue. At the same time, while implementing the rules and regulations governments should improve on providing adequate and affordable access to health care services.

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