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Knowledge and practice on usage of over the counter medicines and influence of socio-demographic factors on them among Allied Health Sciences students in University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

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Background: Over the Counter (OTC) medicines are the medicines that can be consumed without accessing care through medical care professionals. Self-medication with OTC medicines has a significant role to deal with Allied Health Sciences (AHS) students as they are the future healthcare professionals.

Objective: To assess knowledge and practice on usage of OTC medicines and to investigate the influence of socio demographic factors on them among AHS students at the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

Methods & Materials: An institutional-based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among students of faculty of AHS in University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka during October-November 2021. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd year pharmacy, nursing, and medical laboratory sciences (MLS) students were included in this study. A validated self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the information with an in house scoring method. The strength of the associations was estimated from the Chi-Square tests cramer’s V with 95% CI and significance level set as 0.05. Data were analyzed by using SPSS 25.

Results: Out of 440 students included in this study, a total of 402 (91%) participants responded. The majority of the participants were females (63.7%) with mean age of 24.18 (\pm 1.13) years. More than half of them (56.5%) had moderate knowledge where 3.7% had good knowledge. Pharmacy students had higher knowledge regarding OTC medicine usage. ($p < 0.001$, $V = 0.239$). Third year students had higher knowledge ($p < 0.001$, $V = 0.208$). Ethnicity, religion, gender, and monthly family income did not influence the knowledge. Paracetamol (92.4%) was the most common OTC medicine used by students. Third year ($p < 0.001$, $V = 0.240$), age > 24 years ($p = 0.035$, $V = 0.105$) and pharmacy students ($p = 0.020$, $V = 0.139$) were the higher users of OTC medicines.

Conclusion: Paracetamol is the most commonly used OTC medicine among participants. Pharmacy and all disciplines of third year had higher knowledge and practice regarding OTC medicine usage.