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Factors associated with practices towards antibiotic usage in upper respiratory tract infections among undergraduates of University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

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Background: Upper Respiratory Tract Infections (URTIs) are most common acute illnesses. Antibiotics misuse and overuse in URTIs contributes to the development of antibiotic resistance, a global public health challenge over the last decade.

Objective: The purpose of this study was to assess the socio demographic factors that associated with practices towards antibiotic usage in URTIs among undergraduates of University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

Methods & Materials: A descriptive cross sectional study was carried out among 382 undergraduates of University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Stratified random sampling was performed to recruit the participants. A pre-tested, validated and self-administered questionnaire was utilized to collect data and analyzed using Stastical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Chi-square test was performed to find out the association. $p < 0.05$ was considered significant.

Results: The respondent rate was 82.1% (N=314). The majority of the participants were females (64.0%) and mean age was 23.12 ± 0.97 years. Almost 45% (141/314) of the undergraduates had 1-2 episodes of URTIs in the last three months and 42.0% (132/314) of them had self-medicated with antibiotics for their UTRIs. Health Science students were found to have significantly higher scores in practices towards antibiotic usage compared to Non-Health Science students ($p=0.010$). There was a significant influence on practices by the type of faculty the participant represented ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: Our study revealed that the practices regarding the antibiotic usage in URTIs among undergraduates of University of Jaffna was inappropriate. The faculty that the undergraduate represented was the only socio demographic factor that affected practices. Educating undergraduates about rational usage of antibiotics was highlighted.