

# Self prescription pattern amongst undergraduate students in a medical university in Mysore

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## Abstract

**Aims and Objectives:** To study the prevalence and pattern of use of self-medication in undergraduate medical students of JSS Medical College, Mysore. **Methods:** A questionnaire was prepared to study the self prescription pattern. The questionnaire included questions regarding details about the self prescription habits of the students. The study was conducted for a period of 1 month starting from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014. Ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics committee and informed consent from students was obtained before distributing the questionnaire. **Results:** Self medication is prevalent amongst undergraduate students. Fever and headache are the most common symptoms for which students self prescribe. Commonly prescribed drugs include antipyretics at 33.11%, antibiotics at 31.74%, and analgesics at 24.23%. 36.37% of students experienced adverse effects of drugs at one time or other when they had self prescribed. The most commonly seen adverse effect was rashes in 20.28% of study group. The reason for termination of self prescribed medication was cure seen in 66.43% of the study group. No cure/increase in severity of disease was seen in 26.57% of the study group. 6.99% of the students terminated the treatment because of adverse effects. The various reasons for self medication were because of urgency (severity of symptoms) in 48.95% of the students, 30.77% of students resorted to self prescription because of their busy schedule and inability to consult a doctor. Parents and friends were the main source of information to take a particular drug in diseased condition in 33.75% and 30.38% of students respectively. **Conclusion:** there is an urgent need to educate the students about hazards of self prescription.

**Keywords:** prescription pattern, UG medical student.

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## INTRODUCTION

Self-medication is defined as obtaining and consuming drugs without the advice of a physician either for Diagnosis, prescription or surveillance of treatment<sup>1</sup>. The misuse of nonprescription drugs amongst students has become a serious problem. The youth is especially exposed to the media and the increased advertising of

pharmaceuticals poses a larger threat to the young population. This raises concerns of incorrect self-diagnosis, drug interaction, and use other than for the original indication. A survey on widely advertised medications indicated that the majority of college students used at least one of the advertised products, without discussing this with their physicians<sup>2</sup>. Self medication involves acquiring medicines without a prescription, resubmitting old prescriptions to purchase medicines, sharing medicines with relatives or members of one's social circle or using leftover medicines stored at home<sup>3</sup>. The practice of self-medication among doctors develops during their training period as obvious from some studies of self-medication among medical students. These studies have reported high prevalence ranging from 57.7% to 76%<sup>4,5</sup>. Hence we have taken up this study to evaluate the prevalence and related issues of self prescription in undergraduate MBBS students in JSS Medical College, Mysore.

## METHODOLOGY

This questionnaire based study was conducted after obtaining ethical clearance from institutional ethical committee of JSS University, Mysore. The study included undergraduate medical students covering all the semesters. The questionnaire included questions regarding details about the self prescription habits of the students. The study was conducted for a period of 1 month starting from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014. The students were explained in detail about the purpose of the study. A written consent was obtained from them in the questionnaire itself. A total of 150 students were evaluated in the study. Multiple answers were evaluated if a student has used multiple drugs, had more than one adverse effects etc. incomplete questionnaire were excluded from the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1:** Do you practice self prescription(n=150)

Yes	143	95.33%
No	7	4.66%

**Table 2:** Common symptoms: n=332 (of 143 students some gave multiple symptoms)

Fever	122	36.75%
Cough	72	21.69%
Cold	20	6.02%
Pain	118	35.54%

**Table 3:** Common drugs (n=223; of 143 students some gave multiple drugs)

Anti-pyretic	97	33.11%
Analgesics	71	24.23%
Antibiotic	93	31.74%
Antiemetic	12	4.1%
Antiulcer	20	6.83%

**Table 4:** Adverse effects (n=144)

Nausea and vomiting	16	11.8%
Allergy and rashes	29	20.28%
Gastritis	7	4.89%
No adverse effect	91	63.63%

**Table 5:** Cause for termination (n=143)

Cure	95	66.43%
No cure	16	26.57%
Adverse effect	32	6.99%

**Table 6:** Source of information (n=237; of 143 students some gave multiple sources)

Advertisements	55	23.21%
Friends	72	30.38%
Parents	80	33.75%
Previous medication	5	2.1%
Pharmacist	20	8.43%
Books and internet	5	2.1%

**Table 7:** Reasons for self medication(n=143)

Lack of time	40	30.77%
Urgency	70	48.95%
Prior knowledge	19	13.29%
Other reasons	10	6.99%

Majority of the students in our sample practice self prescription. Self prescription is prevalent to about 95.33% in undergraduate medical college. Fever and headache are the most common symptoms for which students self prescribe at 36.75% and 35.54% respectively of the perceived symptoms. Cough is also a common symptom at 21.69%. Commonly prescribed drugs include antipyretics at 33.11%, antibiotics at 31.74%, and analgesics at 24.23%. Antiulcer and antiemetics drugs are prescribed at 6.83% and 4.1% respectively of all the self prescribed drugs. Significant number of students experienced adverse effects of drugs at one time or other when they had self prescribed. 36.37% of study population had experienced adverse drug reaction. The most commonly seen adverse effect was rashes in 20.28% of study group, followed by nausea and vomiting in 11.18% and gastritis (epigastric pain, burning sensation) in 4.89% of the students. The reason for termination of self prescribed medication was cure seen in 66.43% of the study group. No cure/increase in severity of disease was seen in 26.57% of the study group. 6.99% of the students terminated the treatment because of adverse effects. The various reasons for self medication were because of urgency (severity of symptoms) in 48.95% of the students, 30.77% of students resorted to self prescription because of their busy schedule and inability to consult a doctor. 13.29% of the students had prior knowledge of their diseased condition. Parents and friends were the main source of information to take a particular drug in diseased condition in 33.75% and 30.38% of students respectively. Advertisements appearing in mass media were potential source of information of drug in 23.21% of the students. 8.43% of the sample size depended on the pharmacist to obtain the information about drug. 2.10% depended on internet search engines to obtain information while similar percentage depended on the information gathered from earlier prescriptions for self prescription. Self prescription is very rampant in undergraduate students of medical college. Many of them had experienced adverse drug reaction because of the same. These students only become eligible to prescribe for oneself and others only after completing their entire medical education course. Hence there is urgent need to educate the student community about potential hazards of self prescription. Conducting at least a weekly class about ethics, duties, rules and regulation about medical profession, medical prescription will go a long way in inculcating discipline in these students.

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