

## PATTERN AND ATTITUDES OF SELF MEDICATION PRACTICE OF PEOPLE ATTENDING COMMUNITY PHARMACIES

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### ABSTRACT

Taking medicines without a proper diagnosis and advice is not at all a good decision, because there is a fine balance between good and evil, that is between wanted and unwanted effects of a drug. The concept of self medication which encourages an individual to look after minor illness with simple remedies has been adopted worldwide. Most of the self medicating people are unaware of the medicine used for their self treatment. This study aims to monitor such self medication incidence and circumstances under which a person undergoes self medication. The present work was a cross sectional observational study to evaluate self medication pattern of people attending community pharmacies. The study analyzed source of medication used, reason for self

medication, source of information about the medication used, self medication related problems, types of illness for which self medication is practiced and their attitude towards self medication. In this study self medication was found to be with male predominance. The major reason for self medication and source of information was previous experience. Fever, head ache gastro intestinal problems were the main conditions for which people go for self medication.

**KEYWORDS:** Community Pharmacy, Attitude towards self medication, Reason for self medication, Self medication patterns.

### INTRODUCTION

Self-medication is a major form of self-care. According to World Health Organization self-medication is defined as the selection and use of medicines by individual to treat self-recognized illness or symptoms.<sup>[1]</sup> Self-medication means acquiring medicines without a prescription, resubmitting old prescriptions to purchase medicines, sharing medicines with

relatives or member of one social circle, using left over medicines stored at home or failing to comply with professional prescription either by prolonging it or interrupting it too early or decreasing or increasing the originally prescribed dosage.

Self-medication is widely practiced in both developed and developing countries. Medications may be approved as being safe for self-medication by the national drug regulatory authority and such medicines are usually used for the prevention or treatment of minor ailments or symptoms, which do not justify medical consultation. Many countries does not have a list of Over The Counter products, the list of OTC drugs is obtained through exclusion method, that means the drugs which are not in the category of prescription drugs or in the category of drugs used under medical supervision is considered OTC.

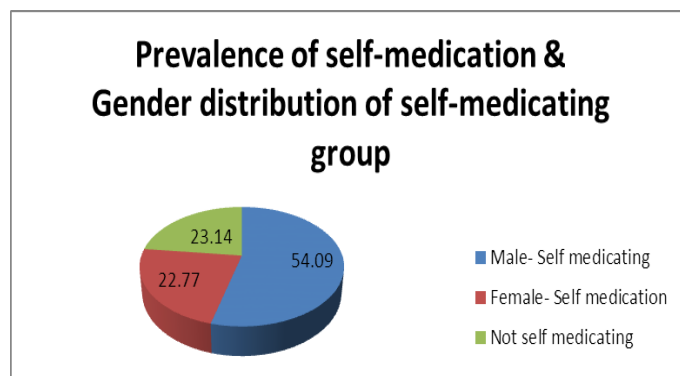
The notion of self-medication which motivates an individual to look after minor ailments with simple and effective remedies has been adopted universally. Easy availability of wide range of drugs coupled with inadequate health services result in increased proportion of drugs used as self-medication compared to prescribed drugs.<sup>[2]</sup> Self-medication practice has so many risks and some benefits. Budding risks of self-medication practices includes incorrect self-diagnosis, delays in seeking medical advice when needed, infrequent but severe adverse reactions, dangerous drug interactions, incorrect manner of administration, incorrect dosage, incorrect choice of therapy, masking of a severe disease and risk of dependence and abuse.<sup>[3,4]</sup> Benefits of self-medication practices include help to prevent and treat symptoms and ailments that do not require a doctor, reduce the pressure on medical services where health care personnel are insufficient, increase the availability of health care to populations living in rural or remote areas and enable patients to control their own chronic conditions.

There are different types of studies related to self-medication practice is already done. These studies were mainly dedicated on different parameters like prevalence, reason, benefits and risks and knowledge of people taking medicine.<sup>[5]</sup> In this study, analysis of self-medication patterns of people, including types of illness, reason for self-medication, source of medication used, source of information about the medication used, self-medication related problems and their attitude towards self- medication and circumstances under which a person undergoes self-medication are analyzed. This study expected to convince the public as well as pharmacist about the proper and safe usage of medicine.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

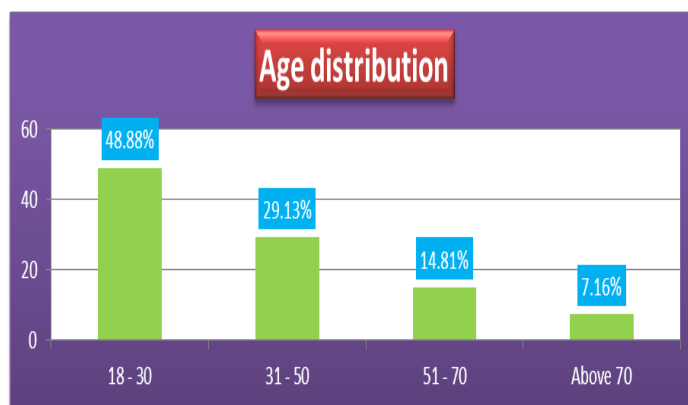
The study was a cross sectional observational study conducted at randomly selected people attending randomly selected community pharmacies (medical shops) in different areas of Calicut city, Kerala, India. The duration of the study was 6 months from March 2014 to August 2014. People of either gender included in the study. During the study period a total of 527 customers who are attending community pharmacy were enrolled into the study. The parameters for evaluation were reason for self-medication, source of medication, source of information about medication used, self-medication related problem and people's attitude towards self-medication. Data were collected using a structured validated questionnaire and direct interview.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



**Prevalence of self-medication & Gender distribution of self-medicating group figure 1.**

Out of 527 customers, 405 customers (76.86%) are taking medicine without doctor's prescription. (Figure 1). The main reason for male predominance may be because they have easy access to medical shop and more communication with pharmacist because males are usually buying medicine for them and also for their female relatives.<sup>[6]</sup>



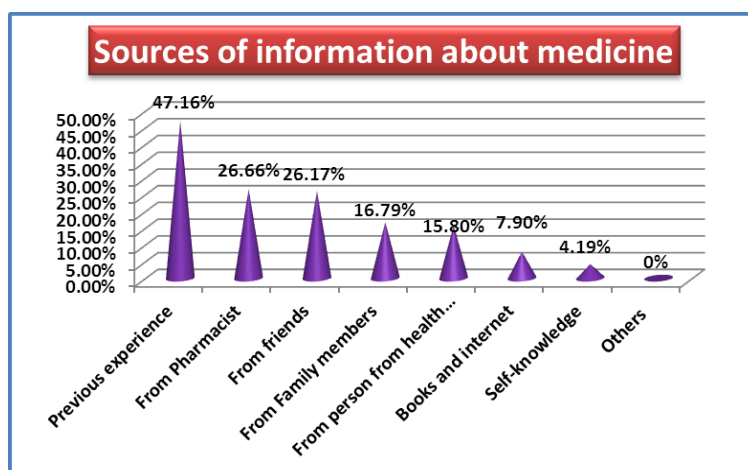
**Age distribution of self-medicating group figure 2.**

48.88% of customers who are self-medicating were observed in age group 18-30 (figure 2). In these age group customers are young, educated and busy with their working environment. If any minor illness occurs, consulting doctor is time consuming, so they directly contact to the medical shop for saving time.

**Reason for self-medication Table. 1.**

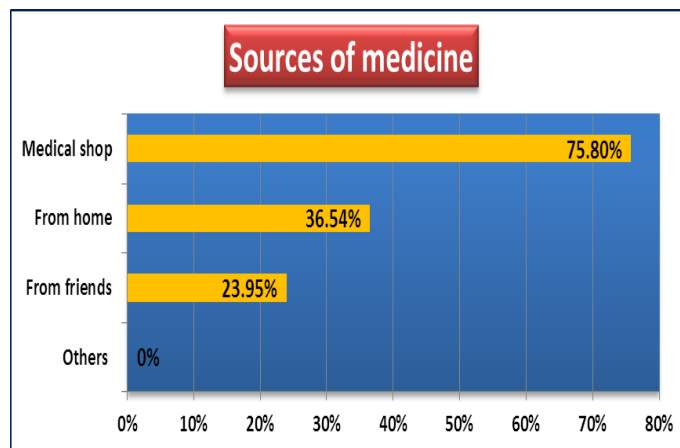
Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Previous experience	218	53.82 %
Lack of time	197	48.64 %
Non-availability of doctor	90	22.22 %
Knowledge about disease and medicine	41	10.12 %
Availability of medicine	26	6.42 %
Financial crisis	5	1.23 %
Others	0	0

53.82% of customers have previous experience and 48.64% of have lack of time as the reason for self-medication (Table 1). When a disease or ailment occur people first consults a doctor and takes medicine accordingly and if they have same symptoms in the next time, they purchase medicine from medical shop by giving previous prescription or saying the drug name. Some people buy medicine first time from the medical shop and next time buying same one as they have experienced that the drug is suitable for the disease. Both are a type of previous experience.



**Sources of information about medicine figure 3.**

Previous experience as the main source of information is due to the reason discussed above, customers got information from pharmacist during the time of buying of medicine or during counseling and the information from friends brought by the positive response experienced from self-medication by a person and pass to other person.



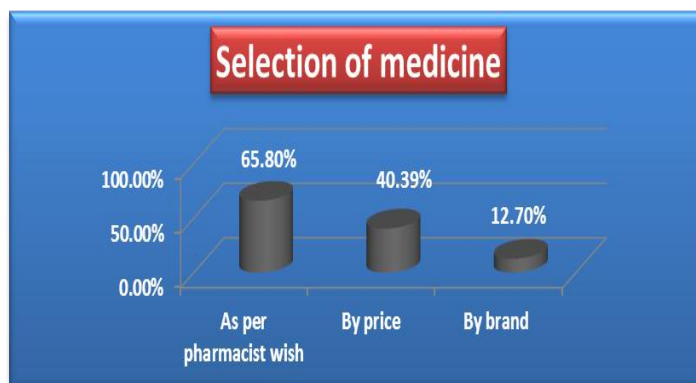
Sources of medicine Figure. 4.

75.80 % of customers have medical shop as the source of medicine (figure 4), others having home and friends as source of medicines. Medical shop is an easy source of medicine from where customers can buy medicine by giving medicine name, disease type or by using previous prescription. Customers getting medicine from home which are previously purchased by relatives and keep it in there, which are taken by other relatives.

**The way by which buying medicine from medical shop Table 2.**

buying medicine	Frequency	Percentage
By disease name	251	82.29 %
By Medicine name	211	68.73 %
By using previous prescription	29	9.51 %

Buying medicine by giving disease name is one of the simple methods for those who does not know the drug names and does not have knowledge about the medicine. Buying medicine by medicine name is done by some customers who have knowledge about the medicine and if they are any doubt they discuss that with the pharmacist.



Selection of medicine figure 5.

The selection of medicine for customers is done by pharmacist in 65.80% of cases, 40.39% customers selecting by price and 12.70% customers by brand (figure 5). As discussed earlier that most of them buy medicine by disease name, so the selection of medicine from different branded product is done by pharmacist. In some cases price will be a selecting factor, customers request to the pharmacist to select medicine which have lower price.

### Attitude towards self medication Table 3.

Attitude towards self medication	Yes	No
Taking other medicines continuously by doctor's advise along with self medication	202(65.80%)	124(40.39%)
Inform doctor about self medication	175(43.20%)	230(56.79%)
Inform pharmacist about taking other medication	185(62.29%)	115(38.72%)
Satisfaction with self medication	364(89.88%)	41(10.12%)
Encouraging others for self medication	298(73.58%)	107(26.42%)
Problem occurred during self medication	39(9.63%)	366(90.37%)

During self-medication 90.37% customers do not experience any problem. The problems with self-medication is less because of they take medicine for minor illness and for short period of time and some have experienced problems is results from the incorrect self-diagnosis or by using medicine which have interaction with already taken medicine. Customer's satisfaction in self-medication is mainly due to they take medicine for minor illness and for short period of time (one time or for one day), so there will not be any severe problems.

### Problem occurred during self-medication Table 4.

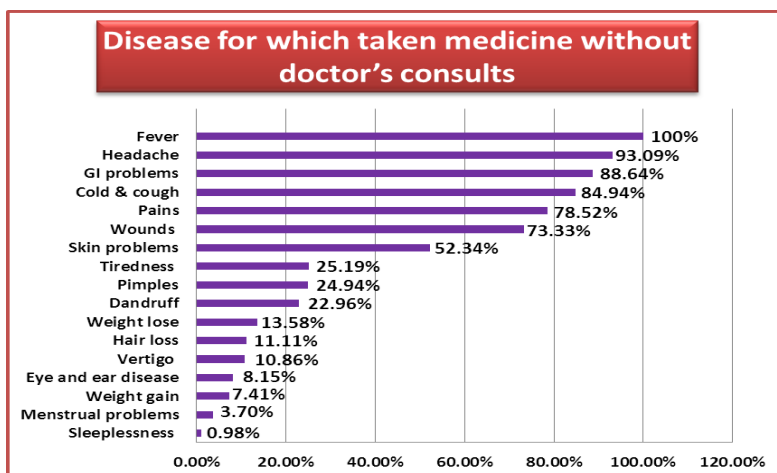
Problem occurred	Frequency	Percentage
Disease not cured	21	53.85 %
Disease increased	15	38.46 %
Side effect	3	7.69 %
Other diseases occurred	0	0 %
Others	0	0 %

### Attitude of customers about taking drug without doctor's consultation Table 5.

Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
Good for previously occurred disease	192	47.40 %
Good for minor illness	160	39.51 %
Not acceptable	41	10.12 %
Good for any disease	12	2.96 %

The attitude of people about self-medication is that 47.40% of the people say self-medication is good for previously occurred disease and 39.51% of them says is good for minor illness.<sup>[7]</sup>

(Table 5). This also results from the positive response experienced by customer with self-medication.



**Disease for which taken medicine without doctor's consults Figure 6.**

In this study the main types of disease for which customers taking medicine without doctor's advice include fever, headache, GI problems, cold & cough and pains, which are similar to other studies (figure 6). This type of diseases are minor, less severe and occurred for short duration, so that customers says that they does not want to spend time for consulting doctor for this types of minor illness, so they contact with medical shops for purchasing medicine.<sup>[8]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The prevalence of self-medication was found to be 76.86%, in which majority of customers have previous experience and lack of time as the reason for self-medication. Majority of the customers have previous experience as the sources of information about the medicine.

The problems arises may be due to incorrect self-diagnosis or by using medicine which have interaction with already taken medicine. So it is important for the customers to discuss with pharmacist disease condition and already taking medicine by doctor's advice.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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