



## THE PREVALENCE OF SELF-MEDICATION AND ITS ASSOCIATED FACTORS IN PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The aim and objective of the study was to identify the prevalence of self-medication practices among individuals. **Methods:** Hundred pre-designed questionnaires were filled by the people. The questionnaire contained the content to determine the associated factors related to self-medication. Then the Performa's were evaluated on the basis of percentages and then results were displayed in graphical form. **Result:** The study found that self-medication is increasing day by day. The 90% individuals use self-medication due to convenience and lack of trust on prescriber. The selection of medicines was based on 40% previous doctor's prescription. The medicines are obtained from

community pharmacy. About 70% of the people partly understand the instructions come with the package insert while 10% didn't understand it. While selection of medicines people consider indication for use by 100%. Majority of People, about 70% considered self-medication is the acceptable practice while 20% said it is not acceptable practice. **Conclusion:** It was concluded from the study that the trend of self-medication is increasing day by day. People consider it safe and convenient for them. They use medicines and modify the dosage according to their needs regardless of the serious outcomes. People consider the indication of medicine and obtained it from community pharmacy. The prevalence of self-medication is common in society.

**KEYWORDS:** Self-medication, Self-Treatment, Self-prescribing, Medicines.

### INTRODUCTION

Self-medication is defined as the selection and use of medicines by individuals (or a member of the individuals' family) to treat self-recognized or self-diagnosed conditions or symptoms. Several benefits have been linked to appropriate self-medication, among them: increased

access to medication and relief for the patient, the active role of the patient in his or her own health care, better use of physicians and pharmacist's skills and reduced burden of governments due to health expenditure linked to the treatment of minor health conditions. However, self-medication is far from being a completely safe practice, in the case of non-responsible self-medication.<sup>[1]</sup>

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. Self-medication involves obtaining 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>[2,3]</sup> The inappropriate use of antibiotics through self-medication may cause significant adverse effects, such as antibiotic resistance, treatment failure, and drug toxicity. Medicines for self-medication are often called 'nonprescription' or 'over the counter' (OTC) and are available without a doctor's prescription through pharmacies. In some countries OTC products are also available in supermarkets and other outlets. Medicines that require a doctor's prescription are called prescription products (Rx products).<sup>[4]</sup>

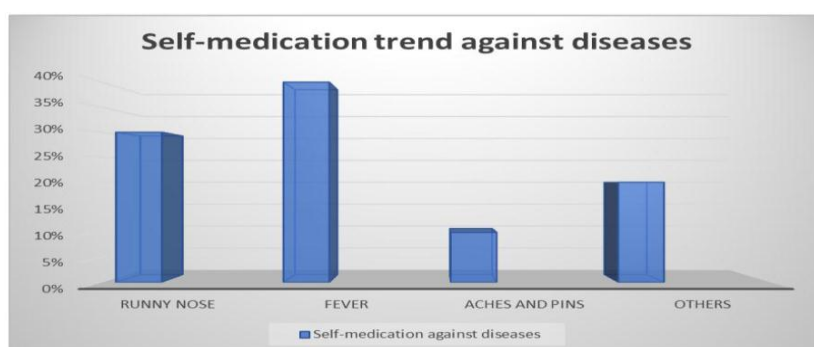
Misuse of over-the-counter (OTC) medication, concurrent use of several medications, and use of home remedies to treat potentially serious diseases, which may lead to misdiagnosis or masking of potential health problems. Potential risks of self-medication practices include: incorrect self-diagnosis, delays 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. In this brief review the author analyzes recent literature on some of the most important dangers related to self-medication practices, particularly: polypharmacy and drug interactions, medications abuse or dependence, misdiagnosis and incorrect choice of treatment. The author also proposes measures that could be adopted to solve or improve these issues.<sup>[5]</sup> Major problems related to self-medication are wastage of resources, increased resistance of pathogens and causes serious health hazards such as adverse reaction and prolonged suffering. Antimicrobial resistance is a current problem world-wide particularly in developing countries where antibiotics are available without any prescription.<sup>[6,7]</sup>

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

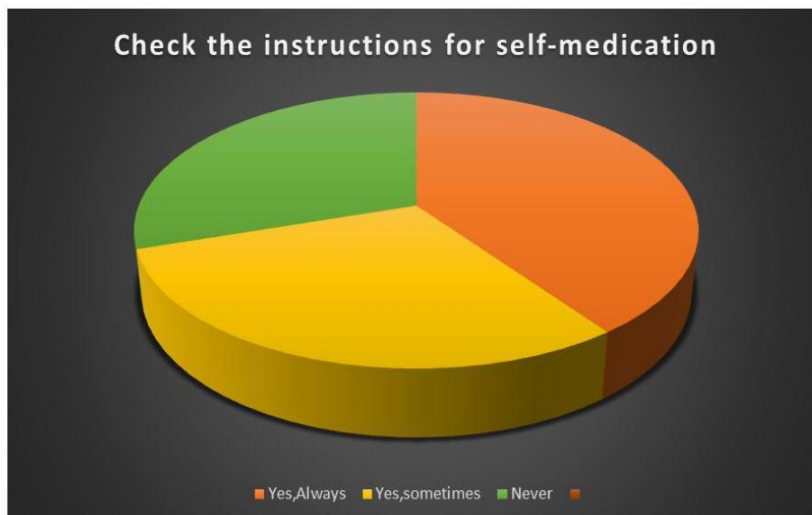
Hundred pre-designed questionnaires were filled by hand in the face to face interaction with people. It was observational and questionnaire based study. Sample size of 100 was selected based on random sampling and questionnaires were filled with detail questioning. Hundred accurately filled questionnaires were then evaluated for study. Questionnaires were designed to observe prevalence and associated factors of self-medication. Data was analyzed in percentages and results are shown in various forms of graphs to show the results.

## RESULTS

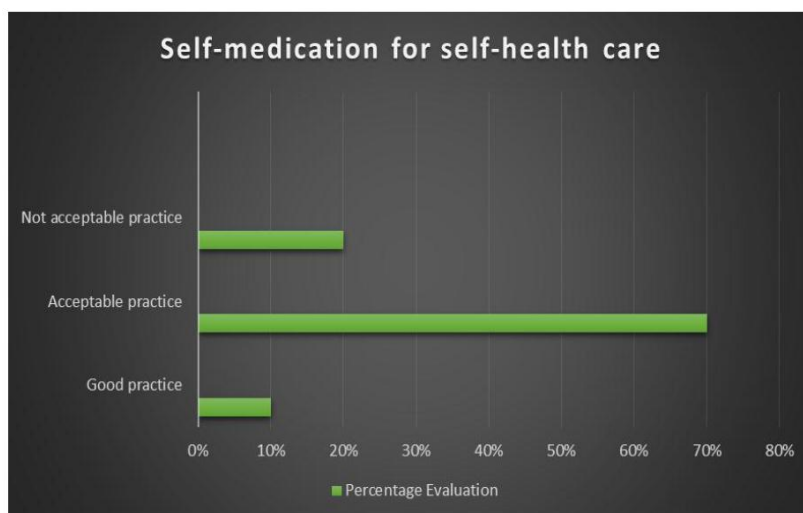
In this study it was observed that the use of self-medicines has been increased by 90% in the society. Almost every person treated her/his self with self-medication. The major reason of self-medication is 90% convenience and 10% are lack of trust in prescribing doctor. Usually people use medicines due to fever, runny nose, aches and pains. About 40% medicines were used for fever and 30% for runny nose and aches and pains, while remaining 30% used for many other purposes. The selection of medicines was based on 40% previous doctor's prescription, 30% on friend's opinion and 30% on personal experience of the people. While selection of medicines people consider indication for use by 100%. It was observed that medicines for self-medication are obtained from community pharmacies. The instructions come with the package insert of medicines were checked by 40% of people. About 70% people partly understand the instructions while 10% fully understand them. In this study it was observed that 80% people change the dosage of medicines to improve the condition of the disease. 90% people switch medicines during self-treatment and 10% didn't do this. It was observed that people stop taking medicines by 50% after symptoms disappeared, 30% when after few days regardless of the outcomes and 20% at the completion of the course. Majority People about 70% considered self-medication is the acceptable practice while 20% said it is not acceptable practice.



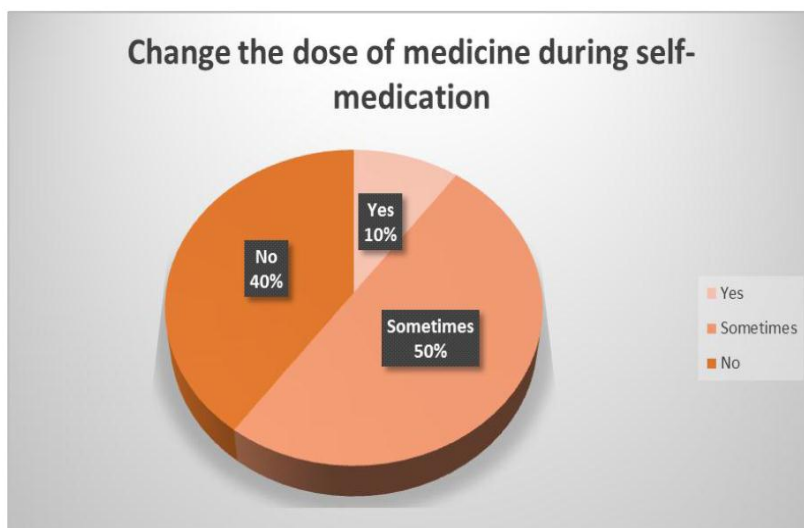
**Trend of self-medication against various diseases.**



**Check the instructions for self-medication.**



**Self-medication for self-health care.**



**Change the dose of medicine during self-medication.**

## DISCUSSION

The trend of self-medication becomes common in society. The people used self-medication for their convenience, lack of trust on prescriber or for cost saving. The main reasons for use of self-treatment is runny nose, fever, aches and body pains. The selection of medicines was based on opinion of friends, previous doctor's prescription and their personal experience. It was found that people consider indications for use while selecting the medicine. Medicines are usually obtained from Community pharmacies. Some people check the instructions come with the package insert while some didn't check these instructions. In study it was found that majority people partly understand the instructions while only few have complete knowledge of instructions. The users of medicines changed the dosage according to their need. They changed the dosage of medicines in order to improve conditions. Majority of the people switch medicines during the course of self-treatment.

During survey data has been collected and analyzed it shows that people switch medicines during the course of self-medication to reduce adverse reactions or the former medicine didn't work. It was found in the study that people stop using medicines after symptoms disappeared or after a few days regardless of the outcome. In case of adverse reactions people consulted a doctor. Majority of the population said self-medication is the acceptable practice, only few people disagree with this statement.

## CONCLUSION

It was concluded from the study that trend of self-medication is increasing day by day. People consider it safe and convenient for them. They use medicines and modify the dosage according to their need regardless of the serious outcomes. People consider the indication of medicine and obtained it from community pharmacy. The practice of self-treatment is increased these days. The people use to treat themselves with self-prescribed medications. They didn't do effort to consult a physician for illness. Self-medication is increasing outbreak these days.

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