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## SELF-MEDICATION AND DRUG ABUSE AWARENESS

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### ABSTRACT

*The study of this paper is based on self-medication and over the counter drugs trend in India. Self medication practice by all walks of people across the world has increased now days. We will focus on urban and rural people, type of self-medication they are taking for themselves' or giving to their family members. This paper will try to answer some questions like – Which types of medicines are brought over the counter and what is the selling price of those medicines? What are the instructions written on the medicines packets that are sold over the counter for an individual to purchase it? By whom are these over the counter drugs are prescribed and for what purpose? By which age group they are purchased the most?*

*We will also explain the adverse reactions and side effects of self-medication. We will also focus on the addicts which are also called as drug abuse. We conducted a study on small group of people from urban and rural area of Maharashtra. In this paper the data was completely analyzed by using descriptive and statistical methods.*

**Keywords:** *Self Medication, Urban, Rural, Drugs, Abuse, Awareness, India.*

### INTRODUCTION

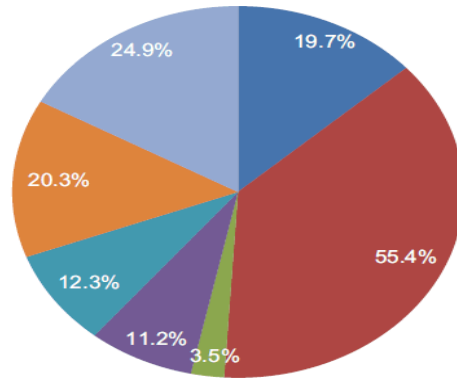
In today's era we are practicing self-medication (SM) as self-care for ourselves and as well as for our family members 'health. In early era of 1965, 1975 self –medication were considered as unhealthy practices by the people. Mostly self-medication is practiced by the people of developing countries. We can define self-medication in a traditional way as “inhaling medicines (drugs), home remedies or even traditional herbs “on they own decision or on the advice of other people (like family members, friends or neighbors”) without any consultation of a doctor. Governments of some countries are encouraging self treatment for minor illness, as self –

medication saves the time of visiting a doctor and the expenses of travelling and the doctors fee. The reason behind some governments encouraging self-medication is that it saves the doctors consultation time as in some developing countries the medical care units and professionals are small in numbers and there are n number of patients for getting them treated for various diseases.

Self – medication is increasing in India day by day. Self – medication in urban areas of India has increased as compared to rural areas of India. The working class people in India have made a habit of self- medication or to buy Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs to cure their illness so that they can go to work the next day and if they still feel ill then they can visit the health-care centers on weekends when they have off. Self-medication is not always about antibiotics but in self-medication daily whey proteins and calcium tablets, etc. Self – medication can cause adverse effects and skin allergies if the dose of the drugs is not taken as per the guidelines on the packet. If the drug dosage is overtaken it can cause death of an individual. Sometimes self-medication also causes addiction to some drugs (medicines) if they are taken on daily bases for quite some time. We will foresee the advantages and disadvantages of Over – the – Counter (OTC) drugs further.

### **Reasons behind Self-Medication?**

These days the new generation have started playing a major role in maintaining their own health by taking self-medication or over – the – counter drugs for short term illness or long term illness. There are many reasons behind self - medication like less number of health care centers, shortage of time, financial unstableness, having sympathy for family members when they fall sick, myth and extensive advertisement on television and the pharma companies endorsing sports personality to sell their medicines that are available over – the – counter for purchase to modern customers (patients). In rural areas the people have a misbelieve that the sport personalities or acting personalities take the medicines without consultation on doctors and with that myth in mind the rural area people start purchasing the medicine for self – medication. The major reason of self – medication in urban areas in India is that there are extensive or lot off over – the – counter (OTC) drugs available for purchase for the customer (patient).



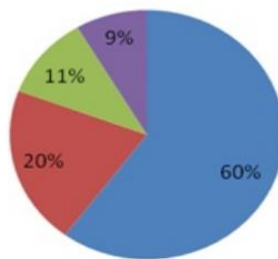
Blue colour indicates time saving (19.7%), red colour indicates minor ailments (55.4%), green colour indicates economical (3.5%), purple colour reflects confidence in self diagnosis (11.2%), sky blue colour indicates previous expertise (12.3%), orange colour represents urgency (20.3%) and light blue colour indicates quick relief (24.9%).

Fig.1:Reasons of Self – Medication (SM).

Category	Medicines
Cold & Cough	Ascoril ,D-cold ,Benadryl syrup
PainKillers	Codeine,Disprin , Saridon
Antiseptic	Savlon , Dettol , Soframycin
Antipyretics	Crocin Advance , Crocin 650 , Capol
Others	PatanjaliChyawanprash , Horlicks Protein

**Table 1** – List of medicines used for self – medication (sm).

■ Only once ■ 2-3 times ■ 4-5 times ■ > 5 times



**Fig.2:** Percentage of Self – Medication (SM) in India.

### **Over – the – Counter (OTC) in India**

- Some of the OTC drugs in India are crocine advance, cyclopam tablet or syrup, Benadryl syrup, imodium etc.
- The price for these drugs range from 12 to 65 (INR) Indian rupees per packet.
- Instruction written on them is, example on crocine advance is if kidney problem, blood pressure problems please avoid taking the dosage or take it as prescribed by the medical professional. One more example of Imodium drug for adult's 4mg dosage at the first sign of diarrhea and dose of 2mg if diarrhea comes again.
- These drugs are taken on advice of friends , family members or on old prescriptions of doctors and sometimes of the advice of pharmacist if any emergency.
- Over – the – Counter (OTC) drugs are purchased mostly between 20 to 35 years of age group individual in India.

### **Advantages of Self– Medication**

- Self – medication gives quick relief.
- Self – medication is fine for minor illness like headache, stomach which is once in awhile and not often.
- Self – medication decreases the absent rate on work place.
- Self – medication saves time visiting the health care centers.
- Self – medication is useful when the health care centers are far to visit and till you reach there you take self-medication to get relief from the pain.
- Self – medication is useful where the public health care centers are less and number of patients is more. This situation is present in some rural parts of India.

### **Disadvantages of Self– Medication**

- Self – medication can lead to incorrect self – diagnosis.
- Self – medication only gives relive for some time but does not cure the disease.
- Incorrect dosage of medicines taken by an individual can put the individual on health risk.
- Self – medication drugs have high rate of adverse effects.
- Over – the – counter drugs can have interaction with food also.

- If a individual is taking self-medication then he/she should know to which chemical compound they are allergic with for example if a individual is allergic to sulphate then he/she should not buy a drug that has a component of sulphate.
- Some individual misuse over – the – counter drugs to get a pleasant feelings example if one individual is taking a sleeping tablet and he/she is not getting sleep in couple of minutes then he/she takes another table to get sleep in couple of minutes.
- Self – medication can also cause reactions with diary food and nuts used in foods.
- Sometimes self – medication becomes a cause of death for an individual.

### **Focus on Rural and Urban India**

The term over – the – counter (OTC) is not there in India for selling medicines to customers (patients). The pharmacists in India can sell medicines to patients or customers only when they show a prescription of a registered medical practitioner (i.e. Doctor) and 46 medicines only can be sold without prescription as per the medicine authority of India .The Indian government has made an organization that is called Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO). The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) has setup schedule H1 from March 1 2014 not to sell medicines without doctor's prescription to control selling of medicines without prescription.[2] In this era of digital India and online shopping, we have witnessed that medicines are also sold online. But these online medical malls or shop also have to as for a prescription before they deliver the medicines to their respective customers at their door step at a discounted rates. On May 2 2015 the well known website snapdeal.com were selling some medicines online without checking the prescription, so the website's CEO was arrested by the police under the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954.As per the norms of Indian government and medical law only a licensed retailer can sell drugs and only by seeing a prescription of licensed medical practitioner (i.e. Doctor).

In urban India the new generation is ordering the medicines online for themselves and even for their family members. The reason behind ordering online is to get the medicines faster and even at discounted rates compared to the general pharmacy shops. Some online pharmacy shops are as follows Netmeds.com, Pharmeasy. in and many more who are selling medicines online. After all

the rule and regulations then also self – medication is practiced in urban and as well as rural India.

### **Discussions with Pharmacist of Rural and Urban Areas of India**

For the research we randomly selected five pharmacy shops from urban area and two pharmacy shops from rural area to know the opinion of the pharmacies of selling the drugs without prescriptions to the customers (patients). The pharmacist of each shop were interviewed by well trained interviewers. One interviewer was allotted for urban area and the other interviewer was allotted for rural area. The pharmacist were asked few questions as follows related to selling of medicines without prescription and the data collected was in format of printed forms then the data was converted into digital format for analysis and saved in Microsoft Excel sheet.

### **Questions**

- Are you selling drugs (medicines) without prescription to people?
- If yes then what is the reason behind it for selling the medicines without prescription ?
- Do you know all the risks attached with self – medication?
- Have you heard the schedule H1 that is regulated by Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) of India? Has this impacted your sales of medicines without the prescription?
- As pharmacist have you all stopped selling medicines without the prescription because of the recent raids conducted by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) and Food and Drugs authorities of India.

### **Study on Self – Medication in Urban and Rural Areas of India**

The study was conducted on 1400 individuals respectively from urban area Mumbai and rural area vidharbha. The focus was to ask the group of individuals in respective areas on what basis do they take self – medication (sm) and treat themselves. We (I and the interviewers) used descriptive analysis for the few questions asked to the pharmacist on self – medication and we also used qualitative analysis. To get the results we used IBM SPSS version 23 to conduct statistical analysis. The group had 710 (50.70%) individuals in urban area and 690 (49.30%) individuals in rural area. The data was collected from people inform of printed forms in urban area and people who were less educated were asked questions in Hindi and Marathi by the

interviewers and was translated in English by the translators. In the rural area the educated individual filled the forms and also helped us to interact with the other individual and helped us to retrieve the data from them in the spoken languages like Hindi and Marathi. The data was then converted in English by the translators and saved in Microsoft Excel for further analysis. We have excluded some individual who had speaking problem or could not express their problems clearly to us.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Total (1400) N(%)</b>	<b>Rural (690) N(%)</b>	<b>Urban (710) N(%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	732 (52.3)	357 (51.7)	376 (52.9)
Male	668 (47.7)	333 (48.3)	334 (47.1)
<b>Occupation</b>			
Farmer	50 (3.6)	50 (7.3)	0
Student	500 (35.7)	225 (32.6)	275 (38.7)
Houswife	300 (21.4)	150 (21.7)	150 (21.1)
Employee	333 (23.8)	123 (17.8)	210 (29.6)
Business	167 (11.9)	127 (18.4)	40 (5.6)
Retired	50 (3.6)	15 (2.2)	35 (4.9)
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Unmarried	634 (45.3)	334 (48.4)	300 (42.3)
Married	766 (54.7)	356 (51.6)	410 (47.7)
<b>Qualification</b>			
Illiterate	100 (7.1)	25 (3.6)	75 (10.6)
School	500 (35.7)	390 (56.6)	110 (15.5)
Graduate	690 (49.3)	195 (28.3)	495 (69.7)
PostGraduate	110 (7.9)	30 (4.4)	80 (11.3)
<b>Chronic disease</b>			
Yes	325 (23.2)	125 (18.1)	200 (28.2)
No	1075 (76.8)	565 (81.9)	510 (71.8)
<b>Health Insurance</b>			
Yes	600	10 (1.5)	590 (83.1)
No	800	680 (98.5)	120 (16.9)

**Table 2**– Characteristics of all participants

### **Rural and Urban study population result**

Self – medication rate in rural area was 15.4% and in urban area was 52.5% after all the analysis. The rate of employed individual is high in urban areas who take self – medication on their own by their own knowledge or by using old prescriptions. The study found out that illiterate

individual too much less self – medication as compared to educated individual in both the areas of India.

## CONCLUSION

This study has justified that self – medication is practiced by everyone that may be a illiterate or a post graduate from rural or urban area. The study has showed us that self – medication is taken mostly for fever, cough and cold, headache, stomachache and even when stomach is upset. This paper study will help other people in future to understand how to decrease the bad habit of self-medication and make people aware how much harmful it is for their health.

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