

ABSTRACT

This descriptive cross sectional study was carried out with the objective of assessing the knowledge, attitudes and practices of patients attending the Medical Clinic of National Hospital of Sri Lanka, on drugs-prescribed to them and their satisfaction on prescribing and dispensing of drugs.

The study sample consisted of 390 patients, selected by systematic stratified sampling technique and the data were gathered by a structured, pre-tested interviewer-administered questionnaire, during the months of August to September in the year 2003. Patients' knowledge and attitudes on drugs and their satisfaction on prescribing and dispensing was assessed in relation to the particular visit, whereas the assessment of patients' practices was based on drugs-prescribed at the last visit. Interviews were carried out immediately after the dispensing. The data processing & analyzing was done using the SPSS software.

The study revealed that patients' knowledge on drugs was poor in some aspects. Only 55.6% of patients were able to name the drugs-prescribed to them and only 28.2% of patients knew the common side effects of them. The risks associated with the improper storage of drugs were understood by only 41.8%. Patients scored well, on facts provided to them in written-form, such as dose (in dosage forms), frequency, duration etc. The degree of knowledge was significantly associated with the age and the educational status of the patient, at $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.001$ respectively.

Majority of patients had positive attitudes on drugs-prescribed to them, whereas only few 28.2% and 25.9% of patients were satisfied with the opportunity given by the Medical Officer and the Pharmacist respectively, to make clarifications needed by them during the consultation and dispensing. Patients' satisfaction was significantly associated with age, at $p < 0.05$.

The study also revealed that 21.8% of patients discontinued the drugs-prescribed to them at the last visit and 38.8% of them did so as they "felt better" and 27.1%, since they felt "since there was no improvement by the treatment". It was also found that 18.7% of patients needed some clarification on the drug regime, after leaving the hospital.

The findings of this study call for more focus in providing patients with basic information on drugs-prescribed to them, with much attention on patients with young age and those who are in low educational status. Verbal information should always be supplemented by written information, in all 3 languages used in the country. In addition, general public must be educated on safe use of drugs. Further, opportunity must be provided to patients to clarify their queries on drugs-prescribed to them, during consultation, dispensing and after leaving the hospital.

