

SUMMARY

This study was done to identify self-medication practices and related factors and to assess the knowledge on western medication among people in DDHS area Panadura.

A community based descriptive cross sectional design with a two stage sampling method was used. At the first stage 20 PHM areas were randomly selected while a cluster sampling technique was used in the second stage. An interviewer administered questionnaire comprising of three parts was used for data collection.

Based on the inclusion criteria 486 subjects were interviewed in the 20 clusters. A self-medication prevalence of 49.6% was found within the two weeks preceding the date of data collection. Out of those, 79.3% had used western medicine alone or in combination with ayurvedic / indigenous medicines.

Self-medication was higher in the age group of 18-34, among female sex and in devotees in Islam religion, which suggest some influence of age, sex and religion on practice of self-medication.

Majority used a single western drug in self-medication while 92.7% knew the drugs used, by their name. Majority of drugs used were over the counter (OTC) and 97.5% classified as essential according to the essential drug list (EDL) of Sri Lanka. However, majority of drugs were used in brand names. Overuse of relatively safe drugs in the community was also seen.

Majority of respondents had resorted to self-medication with the impression that illness was a minor one. Main source of information for self-medication in the current study was experience from a previous illness.

Several gaps of knowledge pertaining to western drugs were revealed. Substantial proportion of subjects was unable to identify at least three drugs by name. Lack of awareness of side effects in western drugs was a major problem identified.

Increasing awareness about western drugs through educational programmes using mass media and concentrating on main issues identified in this study will help to uphold the rational use of drugs in the community.