

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Self-medication is a human behavior in which people self-diagnose their ailments and treat by themselves without obtaining services from physicians. Self-medication is widely used for oral health problems and many potential risks including antimicrobial resistance is associated with inappropriate use of self-medication.

Objective: The aim of the study is to assess self-medication and its associated factors for oral conditions among residents of Piliyandala MOH area.

Methods: A community based descriptive cross-sectional study was employed by using multistage cluster sampling combined with probability proportionate to size technique among residents of Piliyandala MOH area. Total sample size of 450 was selected from 15 clusters in 15 PHM areas. Data collection was done by using pre tested interviewer administered questionnaire, which comprised of two parts. Chi square and fisher's exact test was used to determine the statistical association between variables with the level of significance set at " $p < 0.005$ ".

Results: Prevalence of self-medication for oral conditions was reported as 68.9%. However, only 43.0% of them had the intention of using self-medication as a permanent treatment. Majority (62.6%) had used self-medication for dental pain. Approximately 86% of the participants had used western/Ayurveda drugs or preparations alone or in combination, while 14.8% had used only the home remedies. Paracetamol was the commonest drug used by the participants (50%). Main source for obtaining drugs or preparations was pharmacy or grocery (64.8%) and mostly the pharmacists had dispensed medicines according to the signs and symptoms of the patients. Perception of oral health conditions as minor illnesses was the main reason mentioned by participants (67.4%) for resorting to self-medication. Low level of education, unskilled or informal employment categories, lack of awareness on adverse effects of self-medication, low house hold income levels were associated with self-medication with statistical significance.

Conclusion and recommendation: Prevalence of self- medication for oral conditions was high and among them majority had used the western drugs or preparations.

Increase awareness of both public and professionals and enforce laws for safe use of drugs should be carried out while taking actions to increase utilization of oral health services.

Keywords: Self-medication, Oral health, Health seeking behaviour