

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background: Self-medication with antibiotics (SMA) has become a significant global public health concern due to its contribution to irrational antibiotic use and the emergence of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The World Health Organization has identified AMR as a major global health threat and emphasizes the prevention of Self-medication with antibiotics.

Objectives: This study aimed to assess the practice of self-medication with antibiotics among selected clinic patients attending District General Hospital (DGH) Gampaha. The study also aimed to evaluate the level of knowledge regarding antibiotics and identify individual, socio-economic, cultural and behavioural, health system, and health policy and regulatory factors associated with SMA practices.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among clinic patients by using systematic sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured interviewer-administered questionnaire (IAQ).

Results: Among the participants, 19.3% (n=78) reported practicing self-medication with antibiotics during the previous twelve months.

The mean knowledge score regarding antibiotics was 3.09 (SD = 0.918), corresponding to 61.8%, indicating a moderate level of knowledge.

Among the independent variables, individual factors demonstrated the highest mean score (Mean = 1.25, SD = 0.838; 25%) Statistically significant differences in SMA practice were observed with age ($p = 0.007$), gender ($p < 0.001$), educational level ($p = 0.012$), and marital status ($p = 0.009$).

The strongest correlation was observed between health system factors and SMA practices ($r = 0.904$, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: The findings indicate that clinic patients attending selected clinics at DGH Gampaha demonstrated a moderate level of knowledge regarding antibiotics (61.8 %), and a considerable percentage (19.3 %) of the study population had practised self-medication with antibiotics. The study revealed that factors including individual, socio-economic, cultural and behavioural, health system, and health policy and regulatory factors had a correlation with SMA practices. Furthermore, this study showed self-medication practices were significantly associated with age, gender, Marital status and level of education of the participants.

Recommendations: Strengthening public awareness programmes, improving patient education on rational antibiotic use, and reinforcing regulatory enforcement on prescription-only dispensing of antibiotics are essential measures to reduce SMA practices. In addition, improving the accessibility and efficiency of healthcare services and rational antibiotic use should be addressed accordingly.

Keywords: Self-medication, Antibiotics, Antimicrobial resistance, Rational use of antibiotics, Clinic patients.