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Perception and Practice of Self Medication Among Students Nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals' Complex, School of Nursing, Ile Ife.

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Abstract:

Self-Medication (SM) is the treatment of common health problems with medicines especially designed and labelled for use without medical supervision. It is a tool to treat minor illnesses but improper because there are grave consequences. This study is set to determine the perception and practice of SM among the study population. This descriptive cross sectional study of 125 student nurses was carried out for three months. A self-administered questionnaire with twenty-four items was used to generate data from the participants. The result of the study provides information on perception and practice of self-medication among the study population as 67(53.6%) have good knowledge of SM while 61.6% have previous experience of treating ailment through SM. It was also seen as cost-effective by (41.6%). The study revealed that (52.8%) practice SM because the ailment was a minor one. However, (40%) said it's not safe, and (38.4%) said SM is not always effective. The findings also showed that most students have studied Pharmacology with good knowledge of the efficacy of drugs thus prone to the

practice of SM because they feel they are out to gain. It was recommended among others that the school management should make effort to caution students from self-medication and try as much as possible to make a doctor available for easy accessibility of healthcare treatment by the students.

Keywords: Self-medication, Perception, Practice, Student nurses,

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Introduction

Self-medication (SM) is a public health issue and a global phenomenon (Darshana, 2014). It has become an issue under debate in health care lately (Almasdy, 2011). It is practiced for various reasons such as to promote health and to treat illnesses. The practice of SM is due to availability, access to drugs and medicinal products. Evidence has shown that SM is not restricted to a region or race, both developing and developed countries are experiencing its menace (Sarahrood, 2010). Although the level of SM among developing and developed nations may be different due to the disparities in the cultural, economic, healthcare system and policy variations. SM as a behaviour could be classified as responsible or non-responsible and as a result, the behaviour cannot be considered entirely harmful (Kalaiselvi, Ganesh & Archana 2014).

Responsible SM entails using approved and available medicine in a safe and effective way as directed though without prescription. The drugs used are indicated for a self-recognizable condition following initial medical diagnosis, which means that users have previous knowledge of the use, dose, and side effect(s) of the drug. Responsible self-medication is possible in the developed nations because of education, accessibility to health information, safety and quality health care including government policies on health coupled with the health-seeking behaviour and sceptical expert knowledge (Talevi, 2010).

Non-responsible SM is the use of drugs in the treatment of self- diagnosed ailments or symptoms of diseases without supervision or prescription by a physician (Ruiz, 2010). It is characterized by indiscriminate use of drugs for the management of ailments many of which have resulted into intoxication and other consequences (Galato, et al., 2009).

The most common drugs used without prescription include anti-malarial, analgesics, antipyretics, antibiotics and cough syrup. People trivialise ailments such as headache, fever, cough, throat infection, common cold and stomach ache while, some do perceive some ailments to be too mild to necessitate medical consultation. Gender, age, sex and social role were discovered to have influence on self-medication (Afolabi et al, 2010). The level of self-medication among students is on the high side, although this drugs helps to achieve therapeutic effect after use but, there are risks associated with the usage (Omolase et al., 2012)

Self-medication (SM) is related to risks such as misdiagnosis, drug resistance, use of drugs in excessive amounts, use of expired drugs, prolonged duration of use, drug interactions, poly-pharmacy, hypersensitivity and other toxicological and pharmacological risks associated with improper use of non- prescription medicines (Hector, 2015).

In view of the above, the study investigated perception and practice of self-medication among students' nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals' Complex, School of Nursing, Ile-Ife. Specifically, the study:

i. assessed the knowledge of the student nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex School of Nursing Ile Ife about self-medication;
ii. identified the drugs most commonly used without prescription or among student nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex School of Nursing Ile Ife; and

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iii.   determined the reasons why self-medication is being practiced among student nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex School of Nursing Ile If.

Research Questions

1. What is the knowledge of student nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex School of nursing Ile Ife about self-medication?
2. What are the common drugs being used by student nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex School of nursing Ile Ife and reasons for usage?
3. Why do student nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex School of nursing Ile Ife, self-medicate?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between students' academic level and their knowledge of self-medication.
2. There is no significant relationship between knowledge of the student nurses and practice of self-medication.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive cross sectional design, 125 student nurses participated in the study. The sample was taken by census method. The instrument used for this research project was self-administered questionnaire which was tactfully structured by the researcher for effective and efficient data collection. The instrument was validated through validity and reliability of the instrument.

The data collected were sorted out and coded through the use of statistical package for service solution (SPSS) version 23, descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze this study.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the knowledge of student nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex School of nursing Ile Ife about self-medication?

Table 1: Frequency Count of Knowledge of Self- Medication

VARIABLES	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Self-medication involves the use of homemade drugs and herbs to treat ailment	39	31.2	54	43.2	14	11.2	18	14.4
Self-medication involves the use of drugs not prescribed by authorized medical personnel	66	52.8	42	33.6	03	14	11.2	2.4
Consulting a doctor/health worker before taking drugs for an ailment is always necessary	54	43.2	43	34.4	10	8.0	18	14.4
Purchasing drugs from hospital pharmacy is always necessary	25	20.0	60	48.0	30	24.0	10	8.0
It is better to buy drugs which are in their drug packs	52	41.6	51	40.8	12	9.6	10	8.0

Table 1 shows respondents' knowledge on self –medication. The result revealed that 42.2% of respondents agreed that self-medication involves the use of homemade drugs and herbs to treat ailment and 31.2% strongly agreed with the statement. Also, 52.8% strongly agreed that self-medication involves the use of drugs not prescribed by authorized medical personnel. As regards consulting a doctor/health worker before taking drugs for an ailment is always necessary, 43.2% strongly agreed with this while 14.4% strongly disagreed with the above statement. In addition to this, 48% agreed that purchasing drugs from hospital pharmacy is always necessary while 41.6% strongly agreed that it is better to buy drugs which are in their drug pack.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of knowledge of Self- Medication

KNOWLEDGE	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Good	67	53.6
Poor	58	43.4
S.D =2.5 **MEAN =**4.6		

The result above revealed that 58 (43.4%) of respondents have poor knowledge towards self- medication while 67 (53.6%) have good knowledge towards self - medication.

Research Question 2: What are the common drugs being used by student nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex School of nursing Ile Ife and reasons for usage?

DRUGS	PLEASE TICK		REASONS FOR USING THEM
	F	%	
Paracetamol	111	88.8	Headache (72.1%), fever (6.3%), pain (21.6%)
Septrin	20	16.0	Cough (60.0%), infection (40.0%)
Aspirin	07	5.6	Infection (57.1%), pain (42.9%)
Metronidazole (Flagyl)	63	50.4	Diarrhea (82.5%), pain (14.3%), nearby (3.2%)
Ciprofloxacin	11	8.8	Infection (36.4%), Typhoid (54.5%), Wound (9.1%)
Ibuprofen	16	12.8	Pain (100%)
Penicillin	08	10.0	Wound (37.5%) boil (12.5%), infection (50.0%)
Chloramphenicol	04	3.2	Eye (75.0%), wound (25.0%)
Fansidar	08	10.0	Malaria (50.0%), pain (50.0)%)
Amoxicillin	18	14.4	Malaria (33.3%), infection (33.3%), typhoid (33.3%)
Coartem	38	30.4	Malaria (100%)

Benylin & codeine	08	6.4	Cough (100%)
Ampicillin	12	9.6	Infection (100%)
Antacid/Mist Mag	23	18.4	Heartburn (17.4%), ulcer (69.6%), upset (13.0%)
Tetracycline	05	4.0	Diarrhea (100%)
Vitamins (B complex, C)	31	24.8	Catarrh (64.5%), no reason (29.0%), appetite (6.5%)
Piriton	27	21.6	Catarrh (55.6%), sleep (25.9%), flue (18.5%)
Diclofenac	39	31.2%	Pain (100%)
Procold	24	19.2	Catarrh (95.8%), Rhinitis (4.2%)
Loratidine	13	10.4%	Catarrh (100%)
Tramadol	-	-	
Folic acid	09	7.2	Boost immune (55.6%), Nutrition (44.4%)

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis showing Drugs and conditions commonly used in Self-medication

Table 3 shows the drugs commonly used by respondents and the conditions for using them. From the table, Paracetamol is the most commonly used drugs. 88.8% of respondents used paracetamol. Of the total respondents that uses Paracetamol, 72.1% used Paracetamol for headache, 6.3% used it for fever and 21.6% used it for pain. Also, 50.4% of respondents used Flagyl of which most respondents that abuse the drug commonly used it for diarrhoea. Few percentages of respondents, 8.8% used Ciprofloxacin and most commonly used it for treatment of typhoid. In addition to this, respondents who used Ibuprofen all used it for treatment of pain.

Moreover, 30.4% of respondents used Coartem and reason for using the drug is to treat malaria. 6.4% used Benylin and Codeine for cough, 9.6% used Ampicillin for infection. In addition to this, of the total respondents who used antacid, 17.4% used it for heartburn, 69.6% for ulcer and 13% for stomach upset. The reason for using Tetracycline is to treat diarrhoea. Also, vitamin B complex is used by 24.8% of respondents. The most reasons for using Vitamin B complex is in treating catarrh, to boost appetite and some of the respondents take Vitamin B complex for no reasons.

Conclusively, 21.6% of respondents take Piriton and most reason giving by respondents is to treat catarrh and also to induce sleep. Diclofenac is taking by 31.2% of respondents for pain, 19.2% takes Procold for catarrh and rhinitis and 10.4% also takes Loratidine for catarrh. The result revealed that none of the respondents take tramadol while 7.2% takes Folic acid. Most reason giving by respondents for taking Folic acid is to boost immune system and also because of its nutrition importance.

Research Question 3: Why do student nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex School of nursing Ile Ife, self-medicate?

Table 4: Frequency Count of Reasons for Practice of Self-Medication

VARIABLES	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
I had a previous experience of treating similar ailment.	32	25.6	77	61.6	09	7.2	7	5.6
No Doctor was readily accessible.	13	10.4	54	43.2	15	34.4	15	12.0
It was a minor ailment	42	33.6	66	52.8	12	9.6	05	4.0
The ailment required rapid emergency care.	21	16.8	58	46.4	28	22.4	18	14.4
The ailment did not require western medication.	09	7.2	44	35.2	57	45.6	15	12.0
It was for the purpose of prevention	26	20.8	71	56.8	25	20.0	03	2.4
It is more affordable and cost-effective	32	25.6	52	41.6	12	9.6	29	23.2
Self-medication is safer	22	17.6	17	13.6	36	28.8	50	40.0
Self-medication is readily available	27	21.6	60	48.0	17	13.6	21	16.8
Self-medication saves time	25	20.0	65	52.0	21	16.8	14	11.2
Self-medication is always effective	15	12.0	24	19.2	48	38.4	38	30.4

Table 4 shows reasons why respondents practice self-medication. Most of the respondents, 61.6% agreed that they have had previous experience of treating similar ailment. 43.2% of respondents agreed that no Doctor was readily accessible and thus made them to practice self-medication. Slightly above half, 52.8% agreed that they practice self-medication because the ailment was a minor one while 9.6% disagreed with the statement.

In addition to this, 56.8% agreed that they practice self-medication for the purpose of prevention while 41.6% said practicing self- medication is more affordable and cost-effective. However, 40% strongly disagreed that self-medication is safer. 48% agreed that drugs are readily available while 38.4% disagreed that self-medication is always effective and 30.4% were strongly in support of the statement.

Hypotheses Testing
Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between students' academic level and their knowledge of self-medication.
Table 5: Chi square statistics showing relationship between students' academic level and their knowledge of self-medication

Level	Knowledge		Total	df	X²	P- value
	Poor N (%)	Good N (%)				
100level	17(13.6)	20(16.0)	**37(29.6)**	2	2.027	0.36

200level	21(16.8)	17(13.6)	**38(30.4)**			
300level	20(16.0)	30(24.0)	**50(40.0)**			
Total	**58(46.4)**	**67(53.6)**	**125(100)**			

The chi square result above revealed a p- value of 0.36 (p-value > 0.05) and X²value of 2.027. Since the p-value is greater than the conventional statistical level of significance, it therefore means that there is no significant relationship between students' academic level and their knowledge of self-medication. The null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that irrespective of students' level has nothing to do with their knowledge of self-medication.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between knowledge of the student nurses and practice of self-medication.

Table 6: Chi square statistics showing relationship between knowledge of the student nurses and practice of self-medication

Practice	Knowledge		Total	df	X²	P- value
	Poor N (%)	Good N (%)				
Strongly agree	10(8.0)	12(9.6)	**22(17.6)**			
Agree	6(4.8)	11(8.8)	**17(13.6)**			
Disagree	15(12.0)	21(16.8)	**36(28.8)**	3	2.33	0.04
Strongly disagree	27(21.6)	23(18.4)	**50(40.0)**			
Total	**58(46.4)**	**67(53.6)**	**125(100)**			

The chi square result in table 6 revealed a p- value of 0.04 (p-value < 0.05) and X²value of 2.33. Since the p-value is lesser than the conventional statistical level of significance, it therefore means that there is significant relationship between students' knowledge of SM and their reasons for practice of SM. The null hypothesis was rejected. Most students have good knowledge of self- medication and thus prone their practice of self- medication because they feel they have adequate knowledge of drugs.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that higher percentage of students, 53.6% good knowledge of self-medication. Apart from this, 42.2% of respondents agreed that self-medication involves the use of homemade drugs and herbs to treat ailment and 31.2% strongly agreed with the statement. Also, 52.8% strongly agreed that self-medication involves the use of drugs not prescribed by authorized medical personnel, same as reported by Jamison et al. (2012). This was similarly reported in the studies of Omolase et al (2012) in Nigeria and Shankar et al. (2012) in Nepal whose studies revealed that knowledge of the simplicity of the conditions are certainty of the efficacy of SM.

The common drugs used by students are Paracetamol, Metronidazole, Diclofenac, Piriton, Coartem, Ibuprofen, Septrin etc. Various reasons for using these drugs were giving by the student nurses. 72.1% used Paracetamol for headache, 6.3% used it for fever and 21.6% used it for pain. The reason for using Tetracycline is to treat diarrhoea. Also, vitamin B complex is used by 24.8% of respondents. The most reasons for using Vitamin B complex is in

treating catarrh, to boost appetite and some of the respondents take Vitamin B complex for no reasons.

As regards consulting a doctor before taking drugs for an ailment is always necessary, 43.2% strongly agreed with this while 14.4% strongly disagreed with the above statement. In addition to this, 48% agreed that purchasing drugs from hospital pharmacy is always necessary while 41.6% strongly agreed that it is better to buy drugs which are in their drug packs. This implies that most student nurses do consult doctors before taking any medication.

The reasons as to why student nurses self-medicate includes; they had no doctor readily available to prescribe them drugs and most self-medicate because they had minor ailment to treat. Also, 56.8% agreed that they practice self-medication for the purpose of prevention while 41.6% said practicing self- medication is more affordable and cost-effective. However, 40% strongly disagreed that self-medication is safer but still end up practicing self-medication. Most practice SM because no doctor is available to prescribe the drugs. All these indications agreed with the assertion of Kayalvlizhi and Senapathi (2011) and Afolabi, (2011).

The findings of the study further revealed that there was no significant relationship between students' academic level and their knowledge of self-medication. This implies that the students' level has nothing to do with their knowledge of self-medication. Also, there was significant relationship between students' knowledge of self- medication and their reasons for practice of self - medication. Most students have good knowledge of self- medication and thus prone their practice of self- medication because they feel they have adequate knowledge of drugs.

Implication to Nursing

For effective self-medication, one must be able to understand and thereby explain in an objective manner the benefit of legitimate medical drug use and the dangers of illegitimate self-medication. Nurse's role in health educating the students is paramount and they form the first line of defence against illegitimate self medication

Conclusion

Based on this study, it was evident that student nurses of Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital Complex have good knowledge of self-medication. Most of the students self-medicate Paracetamol, Metronidazole, Coartem for the sole purpose of treating fever, diarrhoea and pain. With respect to these findings, effort should be made by the school management to caution students on self-medication and also to make doctor available at the students' school hostels in case of any emergency. Though, it was evident that most student nurses have good reasons for self-medicating which might be due to their vast knowledge on drugs.

Recommendations

With regards to the results of this study, the following recommendations were made.
1. There should be adequate lectures for students on side effect of self-medication.
2. The school management should make effort to caution students from self-medication and try as much as possible to make a doctor available for easy accessibility of healthcare treatment by the students.

3. As student nurses are the future staff nurses, government and hospital management should intensify efforts to lecture students on side effect of some certain drugs so as to solve self-medication in the communities and the nation at large.
4. Government should introduce and enforce strict reasons against the sales of drugs unqualified and unauthorized people. The government should build more health facilities in the school premises such as dispensary so that students can readily go there for treatment of their minor illnesses.
5. Restriction of advertisement of drugs on the radio and other media stations but government should organize health education program for the public to recognize the dangers inherent in self-medication.

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