

Pattern of Self Prescribed Analgesic use in A Rural area of Delhi: Exploring the Potential Role of Internet

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Abstract

Background: Analgesics are the most common self prescribed drugs. Although considered to be relatively safe, side effects are often seen when these drugs are used for prolonged period, in high doses or used where contraindicated. Majority of the consumers are not aware of the side effects. These days ample amount of information is available on the web, it is important to explore its role in educating the population regarding the safe use of self prescribed analgesics.

Aims: We planned a study with an aim to explore pattern of analgesic use, to identify population at risk of developing side effects related to analgesic use, awareness of side effects and potential role of internet to bring awareness about safe use of self prescribed analgesic drugs in rural area of Delhi.

Material and Methods: A cross sectional survey based study was done on 500 adults in the age group of 18-65 years of Madanpur Khadar area of South Delhi.

Data collection was done by conducting visits to pharmacy shops from the people who were buying drugs without prescription and taking face to face interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire.

Results: Results of our study show that among all the self prescribed analgesics paracetamol (57%) is used most frequently followed by aspirin and NSAIDs. It was found that 9.6% of the consumers were having associated co-morbid illness, 11.4% were simultaneously taking other drugs and 15.2% were alcoholics. Majority (65.4%) of the buyers were not aware about any kind of side effects of the analgesics.

Internet friendly consumers were found to be 44%. Ability to use internet and education level were found to be directly related ($r=0.802$)

Conclusion: The pattern of analgesic consumption in the rural population of Delhi shows that a large number of consumers may be at risk of developing side effects of self prescribed analgesics. The awareness about the side effects is limited. A significant number of consumers are internet friendly. Hence, we recommend use of website/mobile apps as potential source of information in educating the population regarding the use of self prescribed analgesics.

Keywords: Population at risk, side effects, sources of information, role of internet.