

Background

Pharmacists are ideally located in community to ensure safe, effective, and rational use of drugs during self-medication. However, the profession of pharmacist in Yemen has become less trustworthy and many drugs are dispensed without any medical supervision. Regardless of the intensive research spent, little information has been available about self-medication practice and the role of drug dispensers in Yemen.

Objective

To explore the role of drug dispensers during self-medication practice in Yemen.

Methods

- An in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted through purposive sampling technique.
- 20 drug dispensers recruited from 10 community pharmacies in Sana'a City.
- Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim & translated into English.
- The transcripts were analyzed thematically using constant comparison approach.

Results and Discussion

Many important themes and subthemes were identified in this study (Table 2). Although drug dispensers were admitted to be responsible for drug irrational use during self-medication, it is clearly obvious that health authorities are part of the problem. It was confirmed by many respondents that most of drug dispensers in Yemen are not pharmacists, but either diploma

holders or dispensers with some experience only which was confirmed by other researchers.¹ The profession of pharmacy was reported to become less trustworthy. Similar results were found in other studies.^{1,2} It was stated in one study that most pharmacists are not satisfied with the quality of education in Yemen due to the lack of clinical pharmacy and pharmacy practice courses and qualified lecturers in private colleges.³ Such results were found to be consistent with the findings in this study. Chewing khat and smoking were suggested to negatively influence self-medication which was confirmed by other studies. Chewing khat and smoking were reported to be associated with GIT⁴ and RTI problems.⁵

Respondents characteristics	N
Gender	
Male	19
Female	1
Educational level	
Diploma in pharmacy	6
Bachelor in pharmacy	14
Antibiotic dispensing without prescription	
Yes	20
No	0

Table 1: Respondents descriptive analysis



Figure 1: Map of Yemen

Self-medication practice in Yemen is high

Irrational dispensing by drug dispensers in Yemen

"All medications are dispensed as OTC not just antibiotics ... drugs like benzodiazepines as well ... I have the right to dispense anything! (Rami, diploma in pharmacy)

Quality of pharmacy education in Yemen is poor

OTC drugs were not properly covered in community pharmacy

There is not one specific course covers all the OTC drugs, talks about self-medication or counseling. However, it is scattered here and there (Sameer, pharmacist)

Quality of pharmacy education in Yemen is poor

The education is poor and a lot of what we studied in college were not of a great importance compared to what we experience in pharmacy practice. (Fahmi, pharmacist)

Perception toward health care services in Yemen

Profession of pharmacists has become less trustworthy

There are a lot of "intruders" who are doing our job, yet they are not pharmacists. They are the reason behind the bad reputation we have in Yemen. (Hashem, pharmacist)

Health care services and control in Yemen is poor

Ministry of health has zero control on pharmacies. Look at the packaging of this drug and powder's color of this one. (Safwan, diploma in pharmacy)

Perception toward the effect of smoking & khat

Khat chewing & Smoking influence self-medication

Many smokers are suffering from RTIs and they come to me all the time asking for help (Fahmi, pharmacist)

Chewers use more pain killers than others to treat teeth, gum problems, GIT disturbance and erectile dysfunction as well. (Waleed, diploma in pharmacy)

Table 2: Themes & subthemes from respondents' interviews



Figure 2: Sana'a City



Figure 3: Khat

Conclusion

There is an urgent need for educational campaigns to increase awareness among drug dispensers toward the risk of irresponsible self-medication. Only qualified pharmacists should be allowed to dispense medications, pharmacy curriculum need to be reviewed and updated to address important health issues including self-medication and health authorities must urgently ensure the enactment of pharmacy law.

References

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