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Fernando Hirunya

Scientific adviser: Ph. D., Associate Professor V. N. Borthonovski

Educational institution
«Gomel State Medical University»
Gomel, Republic of Belarus

PREVALENCE OF SELF-MEDICATION WITH ANTIBIOTICS AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines self-medication as “the use of drugs to treat self-diagnosed disorders or symptoms, or the intermittent or continued use of a prescribed drug for chronic or recurrent disease or symptoms”. Self-medication of antibiotics (SMA) has been recognized as inappropriate and irrational use of antibiotics and overall self-medication is considered as irrational. Globally, the non-prescription consumption of antimicrobials has been growing and is recognized as a key risk factor for antimicrobial resistance (AMR). This study was conducted to establish the status of SMA among the community of foreign medical students of the Gomel State Medical University. Moreover, it is aimed at identifying common perceived illnesses that required SMA, determining commonly used antibiotics, planning of educational and regulatory interventions to promote the rational use of antibiotics using the results of the study [1, 2].

Goal

To give a territorial-temporal characterization of the incidence of self-medication of antibiotics among healthcare students which is a common practice due to their knowledge of pharmacology of antibiotics, which produces a false sense of confidence in self-diagnosis of disease conditions. Hence, this study was conducted to assess the practice of self-medication with antibiotics among medical students.

Materials and Methods of research

An interview/questionnaire based descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted in the Faculty of foreign medical students, Gomel State Medical University, Gomel, Belarus.

The results of the research and their discussion

The findings of the study shows that there was a difference between medical students in clinical science years (seniors) and those in their initial basic science (juniors) years when it comes to their knowledge about antibiotic resistance. Medical education before graduation about antimicrobial resistance is one of the important sources that increase their knowledge about antibiotics. Subjects such as pathology courses, pharmacology, clinical pharmacy, and microbiology are opportune for antibiotic and antimicrobial resistance education.

With migration of foreign students comes linguistic diversity, and in health care this often translates into linguistic discordance between patients and healthcare professionals. This can result in communication difficulties that lead to lower quality of care and poor outcomes. Inequalities in relation to language: communication barriers, defined as barriers in understanding or accessing key information on health care and challenges in reporting on health conditions, are known to have compounded into higher prevalence of self-medication [3].

Among the other prevalent causes were stated as previous experience of same illness, doctor's advice not deemed necessary and save time/absence of time to refer. Another major factor for SMA is monitory limitation/expediting a quick access to treatment with a reduced budget thus usage of left-over antibiotics from the colleagues was heightened [4]. Majority of the students made points with regard to the narrow coverage of the medical insurance when seeking healthcare as foreign resident being one of the factors for self-medication.

Conclusion

Undergraduate medical students had good-moderate knowledge and attitude towards antibiotic use and antibiotic resistance, and yet an alarmingly high prevalence of self-medication with antibiotics. Particularly more senior medical students are less likely to practice SMA than junior medical students, reflecting their deeper knowledge of antibiotic use and misuse. Sore throat was the commonest cause for it while the most commonly self-medicated antibiotic was azithromycin. Thus self-medication with antibiotics in medical students is concerning because they are future prescribers of antibiotics; who are supposed to promote rational use of antibiotics. This highlights the urgency in planning of educational and regulatory interventions to promote the rational use of antibiotics among the students of foreign medical faculty of the university.

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