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MEETING ABSTRACT

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Content of home pharmacies and self-medication practice in households in Novi Sad, Serbia

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Background: Data regarding the contents of drugs in households and inclination of patients toward self-initiated treatment are scarce. The aims of this study were to analyze the volume and structure of drugs in households and intended self-medication in a general population.

Methods: The study was prospective, comparative and randomized. Data were collected from households in the municipality of Novi Sad in the period of 8 months (December 2011 – July 2012). In order to obtain a sample of 383 households, which was calculated on the basis of pilot study conducted in the municipality of Novi Sad in 2010, 1008 households were contacted (response rate 38.0%). The first part of the survey was collecting data when the researcher conducted a review and analysis of all drugs in the household. In the second part drugs were classified according to the ATC classification and then analyzed whether they were OTC (over the counter) or POM (prescription-only medications) and whether they were obtained on prescription or bought without prescription. Households with and without children younger than 12 and elderly households were analyzed separately.

Results: The average number of drug packages per household was 11.5 ± 5.8. The highest percentage of prescription-only medications was in elderly households (71%), while the highest percentage of OTC drugs was in households with children (51%). In households with and without children the most common prescription-only medications were anti-rheumatic and anti-inflammatory products (24.6% and 17.7%, respectively) and antibiotics for systemic use (14.7% and 13.2%, respectively), while in elderly households the most common drugs were agents acting on the renin–angiotensin system (11.5%) and psycholeptics (9.4%). More than half of the drugs in the household were purchased on patients’ own initiative (53.9%). The highest percentage of drugs purchased without prescription was in households with children (45.0%), while the lowest percentage was in elderly households (16.8%). The most common purchased groups of OTC medicines were analgesics (41.8%) and nasal preparations (14.4%), while the most often bought prescription only medications were antihypertensive and anti-inflammatory products (41.5%) and systemic antibiotics (12.4%).

Discussion: A large number of drugs in some surveyed households may be explained by excessive prescribing, noncompliance with recommended treatment and oversized drug packages. Despite the regulation prohibiting off-prescription sales of antibiotics, the second most common group of POM bought without prescription encountered in households were antibiotics, following anti-inflammatory and anti-rheumatic products. Similar results were recorded in a Croatian research of home pharmacies [1]. Self-medication with POM was observed at a higher rate in households with children younger than 12 years of age, while the tendency towards self-medication was the lowest in households with elderly population. This is also comparable with results of a Belgian study [2].

In conclusion, our survey indicated that self-medication with prescription drugs appears to be a rather common practice.

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References


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