

Medication Practices in the Management of Upper Respiratory Tract Infections among Undergraduates of University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

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Upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs) are one of the most commonly encountered diseases in both paediatric and adult populations and they represent a significant cause of antibiotic abuse which contributes to antibiotic resistance. This study mainly aimed to evaluate the medication practices of URTIs among undergraduates at the University of Jaffna. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 382 undergraduates of University of Jaffna from July 2019 to November 2020. Stratified random sampling was performed to recruit the participants and the data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and analysed using SPSS version 23. The response rate was 82.1% (n=314) for this survey. The majority of the respondents were female (64.0%) and unmarried (97.1%). Almost 45.0% of participants had URTIs at least once in the last three months and the common cold was the most frequently reported URTI symptom. Most of the students had antipyretics (74.8%), Vitamin C (73.8%), herbal remedies (72.0%), antibiotics (63.7%), cough syrups (55.0%) and antihistamines (54.4%) to treat their URTIs. A considerable number of students, 42.0% had self-medicated with antibiotics. Compared to Health Science students, Non- Health Science students significantly shared their antibiotics with friends or family members ($p < 0.05$) and kept leftover antibiotics to be used in similar disease conditions in the future ($p < 0.05$). This study concluded that majority of the undergraduates at the University of Jaffna had inappropriate antibiotic usage in URTIs and it suggested that educational programs should be designed to educate undergraduates irrespective of course of study regarding rational usage of antibiotics.

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