

Self-medication habits during the COVID-19 pandemic

Erica Campos, Margarida Espírito-Santo, Tânia Nascimento
Escola Superior de Saúde, Universidade do Algarve, Faro, Portugal

Background

Self-medication is a common practice worldwide. During COVID-19 pandemic, the constant fear of going outside and to use health services may have had an impact in the number of visits to Community Pharmacies. This research aimed to study self-medication habits of the Portuguese population during the current pandemic, more specifically, to understand which non-prescription drugs and food supplements were taken and the situations that conduced to the use of self-medication.

Methods

An online structured survey was conducted, with data obtained anonymously and included 170 participants (≥ 18 years). Data were processed using SPSS v26.

Results

Participants in this study were mainly female (81.2%), with a mean age of 38.01 ± 1.16 years old and most (84.7%) over 12 years of schooling. Answers allowed to verify that the current pandemic didn't affect that much the frequency of visits to Pharmacy and the situations where people used self-medication were mainly minor, such as headaches (54.1%) and muscle pains (26.5%). The medications used more often were analgesics (60.0%) and anti-inflammatory (40.0%). However, many people indicated that they didn't seek for more information about medicines (49.4%) and/or supplements (7.6%) used during this period. In general, people visited the Pharmacy with a similar frequency and purpose as the previous year.

Conclusions

Despite all the changes, the current pandemic has not negatively affected the practice of self-medication. The role of Pharmacy professionals in the rational use of the drugs, particularly those used in self medicated situations is essential, especially when the population shows low health literacy regarding the use of medicines.

Keywords: Non prescription drug, Pandemic, Self medication, Food supplements.