

PREVALENCE AND FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SELF-MEDICATION WITH ANTIBIOTICS AMONG ENGINEERING STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MORATUWA: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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Background: Self-medication is an important public problem across the world, with a varied prevalence ranging from 11.7% to 92%. It has been recognized as a leading cause of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). A Sri Lankan study revealed that 11% (108/998) had self-medicated the last time they took antibiotics.

Methods: This cross-sectional analytical study was conducted among engineering students at the University of Moratuwa, using multistage stratified sampling. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire covering socio-demographics, self-reported health, knowledge on antibiotics, and self-medication practices. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 26.

Results: Among 215 students, 43.7% reported self-medication with antibiotics. Frequently treated conditions included sore throat (39.4%) and fever (31.9%). Side effects were experienced by 50%, with 41.5% requiring hospital admission. Common reasons for self-medication included difficulty accessing healthcare (58.5%) and perceived knowledge (50%). Knowledge levels varied, with associations observed between ethnicity and having a family member in healthcare ($p < 0.05$). Logistic regression showed a statistically significant association between self-medication and living alone (OR=0.19, 95% CI: 0.048–0.741, $p = 0.02$) and lower knowledge scores ($p = 0.02$).

Conclusion: The prevalence of antibiotic self-medication among engineering undergraduates in the University of Moratuwa was 43.7%. Factors associated with this behavior included lower knowledge about antibiotics and living arrangements. Further research in diverse populations across Sri Lanka is essential to determine the extent of this issue. Educational initiatives targeting students' understanding of antibiotics and their responsible use should be prioritized.

Keywords: Self-medication, Prevalence, Antibiotics, Engineering students, University of Moratuwa