

## KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE TOWARDS RESPONSIBLE SELF-MEDICATION AMONG PHARMACY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Responsible self-medication is an essential component of self-care and plays a significant role in reducing healthcare burden. However, inappropriate self-medication may lead to adverse drug reactions (ADRs), antibiotic resistance, and delayed diagnosis of serious illnesses. **Objective:** To assess the knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) toward responsible self-medication among pharmacy students. **Methods:** An observational cross-sectional study was conducted among 247 pharmacy students at Excel College of Pharmacy, Namakkal, Tamil Nadu, from October 2025 to February 2026. A pre-validated, self-administered questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage). **Results:** The majority of participants were aged 18–22 years (95.9%) and male (65.2%). Awareness regarding the term self-medication was high (86.2%). About 58.3% reported practicing self-medication in

the last six months. Headache (56.8%) and fever (34.2%) were the most common indications. Although 72.3% followed recommended dosage, 36.8% preferred prescription-only medicines. Around 35.4% experienced adverse effects. **Conclusion:** Pharmacy students demonstrate good knowledge and generally positive attitudes toward responsible self-medication. However, gaps in practice such as use of prescription medicines without consultation and dosage deviation remain. Strengthening academic training on rational drug

use is recommended.

**KEYWORDS:** Self-medication, Responsible drug use, Pharmacy students, OTC drugs, Adverse drug reactions, KAP study.

## INTRODUCTION

Self-medication is defined as the use of medicines to treat self-diagnosed disorders or symptoms without professional supervision. The World Health Organization recognizes responsible self-medication as the appropriate use of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines by informed individuals to treat minor ailments.<sup>[1]</sup>

Self-medication is commonly practiced worldwide, particularly in developing countries. It is frequently used for conditions such as headache, fever, cold, cough, gastrointestinal disturbances, and minor infections.<sup>[2,3]</sup> While responsible self-medication may reduce healthcare burden and cost, irrational use can result in antibiotic resistance, ADRs, drug interactions, and masking of serious illnesses.<sup>[4]</sup>

Pharmacy students possess pharmacological knowledge that may influence their self-medication practices. As future healthcare providers, their knowledge and behavior toward responsible self-medication are crucial. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practice toward responsible self-medication among pharmacy students.

## METHODOLOGY

**Study Design:** An observational cross-sectional KAP study.

**Study Setting:** Excel College of Pharmacy, Namakkal, Tamil Nadu, India.

**Study Duration:** October 2025 to February 2026.

**Study Population:** A total of 247 pharmacy students (D.Pharm, B.Pharm, Pharm.D, M.Pharm) participated in the study.

**Study Tool:** A pre-validated, structured self-administered questionnaire consisting of four sections.

1. Sociodemographic details
2. Knowledge-related questions
3. Attitude-based statements
4. Practice-related questions

**Data Collection:** Data were collected using Google Forms after obtaining informed consent.

**Statistical Analysis:** Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and expressed as frequency and percentage.

## RESULTS

### Sociodemographic Characteristics

Most respondents were aged 18–22 years (95.9%) and male (65.2%). A majority belonged to rural areas (67.6%), and most were B.Pharm students (95.4%).

### Knowledge Assessment

- 86.2% were aware of the term self-medication.
- 85.4% checked expiry dates before purchasing medicines.
- 78.8% agreed that self-medication is not safe in all age groups.
- 65.7% agreed that self-medication is not free from ADRs.

### Attitude Assessment

- 67.4% did not prefer self-medication for all illnesses.
- 41.4% prioritized dosage instructions while purchasing medicines.
- Majority agreed that higher doses may cause harm.

### Practice Assessment

- 58.3% practiced self-medication in the last six months.
- Common indications: Headache (56.8%), Fever (34.2%).
- 36.8% preferred prescription-only medicines.
- 72.3% followed recommended dosage.
- 35.4% experienced adverse effects.

## DISCUSSION

The present study shows a high level of awareness regarding responsible self-medication among pharmacy students. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted in Malaysia and India, which reported good knowledge but high prevalence of self-medication practices.<sup>[5,6]</sup>

Although most students demonstrated appropriate knowledge, a significant proportion preferred prescription-only medicines without consultation. This practice increases the risk of

antibiotic resistance and ADRs. The 35.4% rate of adverse effects further highlights the potential risks.

The findings suggest that theoretical knowledge does not always translate into safe practice. Strengthening curriculum components on pharmacovigilance, rational drug use, and antibiotic stewardship is essential.

## CONCLUSION

Pharmacy students possess good knowledge and generally positive attitudes toward responsible self-medication. However, inappropriate practices such as use of prescription-only medicines and dosage deviations persist. Educational reinforcement on rational drug use, ADR reporting, and responsible self-medication is necessary to ensure safe practices among future pharmacists.

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