Trends of Home Drug Storage and Use in Different Regions across the Northern United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

Objectives: To investigate the habits of use and home storage of over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription drugs.

Subjects and Methods: A pretested questionnaire was distributed to university students who represented 300 household units in different regions of the northern United Arab Emirates. Household chairs (parents) answered questions on various aspects of home use and storage of OTC and prescription medicines. The number of drugs stored at home was collapsed into 5 unequal groups (1–3, 4–6, 7–10, 11–15 and 16–20). Results: The response rate was 300 (100%). The average number of drugs per household unit was 6 items. Almost 40% of the participants stored between 16 and 20 drugs. More than half (56%) of the household units stored medicines in a home pharmacy kept either in the bedroom (n = 66; 39%) or in the kitchen (n = 71; 42%). No correlation was found between the level of education and the number of family members (r = 0.29) or drugs stored at home (r = –0.35). Only 2 (0.7%) of the participants did not keep drugs at home. There was a clear discrepancy in either OTC or prescription drugs stored, and the variation in the utilization and preference of drugs was obvious among the pooled sample. Conclusion: Various problems related to the use and storage at home of OTC and prescription drugs were revealed. Discussing the results of this survey with students who participated as members of the household units that took part in the study may prove to be a helpful intervention. The need for public educational efforts on the rational use of medicines at home is urgent to foster awareness of the proper use of drugs.