

Title: Impact of community pharmacists' knowledge on self-reported antibiotic dispensing practice

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Abstract:

Background Pharmacists in Sri Lanka continue to illegally dispense antibiotics without a prescription. **Methods** A random sample of 342 pharmacies in Sri Lanka were surveyed using a self-administered questionnaire on their antibiotic knowledge and dispensing practice. **Results** A total of 265 (210 pharmacists, 55 other staff) responded. Mean antibiotic knowledge score was 26.1 (SD 3.9; range 1-33, max 35), and significantly higher among pharmacists than other staff $t(263)=2.41$, $P=0.017$. Knowledge score on antibiotic resistance (ABR) and legal aspects of antibiotic dispensing were higher among pharmacists ($P < 0.05$). Reported dispensing of antibiotics on patient request, and specifically for viral or bacterial infections ranged from 10% to 32%. ABR knowledge reduced the risk of dispensing antibiotics without a prescription by pharmacists for viral infections in adults (Adj. OR=0.73, 95% CI: 0.55-0.96; $P=0.027$) and children (Adj. OR=0.56, 95% CI: 0.39-0.81; $P=0.002$). Awareness of legal aspects of antibiotic dispensing reduced pharmacist dispensing in general (Adj. OR=0.47, 95% CI: 0.30-0.75; $P=0.001$), and specifically for bacterial infections in adults (Adj. OR=0.43, 95% CI: 0.26-0.73; $P=0.002$) and children (Adj. OR=0.27, 95% CI: 0.11-0.65; $P=0.004$). Pharmacists' knowledge about antibiotic use also reduced the dispensing for upper respiratory tract infections (Adj. OR=0.77, 95% CI: 0.62-0.97; $P=0.023$) and acute diarrhoea (Adj. OR=0.76, 95% CI: 0.58-0.99; $P=0.048$). **Conclusion** Appropriate legal and clinical knowledge about antibiotics has a major impact on reported antibiotic dispensing practice.