

LETTER TO EDITOR

Self-Medication: Pros and Cons

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To,
The editor,

Modern healthcare systems are progressing with every passing day. Self-medication, which has been there for a long time, has been successfully integrated in many of those systems and now remains as an important part of the healthcare in this era. The products associated with self-medication are those which can be easily acquired. They do not require a medical prescription and can be used by the patient to treat, and prevent ailments and symptoms. A patient can easily manage those products. But, if the issue persists, and there's no change, then the patient could consult a doctor. Over the years, it is the increase in the competition, as in, the promotion of self-medication products which has assisted greatly in the self-medication and patient awareness of the availability of self-medication products. Self-medication, however, is not without its pros and cons. One of the major self-medication issues is its usage. People tend to self-diagnose and treat themselves, but it can go the other way too. Lack of information related to ailments and symptoms can lead to further issues. The availability of the drugs is also too much, and there tends to be less control. The perception regarding certain drugs is built through marketing by pharmaceutical companies. An example would be the painkillers. Prolonged use of painkillers can lead to various problems. For example, Paracetamol is an antipyretic and analgesic, and its usage in large dosage can cause liver problems. The other example of this is the potential growth of resistance against antibiotics, which can prove dangerous to a person.¹ It can be said that the use of over-the-counter (OTC) self-medication drugs such as analgesics is widespread and the potential impact from the use of these drugs on the development of chronic renal failure may be significant.² Moreover, there have been reports received of OTC medicines being misused by people addicted to drugs.^{3,4} Self-medication, however, has its good aspects too. It can help a person get rid of an ailment without consulting a doctor. The immediate relief is one of the most important aspects of it. Self-medication can be made

available to remote places where immediate availability of doctor is an issue. A person, through self-medication, gets chance to understand their body better. Cost saving, as well as time saving is also there. In many cases, self-medication products are also understood to mean alternative medicines, food supplements, vitamins, herbs or other substances contained in commercially available products.⁵

In conclusion, it can be said that self-medication remains an essential part of modern-day healthcare system, but there needs further study, along with informing the masses about its pros and cons. The data available is still insufficient, and that needs to be taken care of. Self-medication, undeniably, is something that should not be stopped; rather the people should be encouraged to be more informed about it. Advice to the consumer/patient should include a detailed description, on the usage of the product without medical supervision and the circumstances in which referral for medical advice is required. Having said that, self-medication should still be considered something secondary to proper consultation with a doctor.

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