

## - Health self-care

## Effects of self medication

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SELF-MEDICATION can lead to serious consequences such as delay in diagnosis of illness, drug resistance, development of co-morbidities and in some cases of death. If the self-diagnosis is wrong then the misdiagnosis can result in improper health care, including wrong treatments and lack of care for serious conditions.

One of the greatest dangers of self diagnosis in psychological syndromes is that you may miss a medical disease. Some drug interactions can make the drug you take less effective.

The freedom to buy pharmaceutical drugs that have not been prescribed by registered health practitioners is raising serious concerns in Pakistan. Unlike developed countries where the management of medicines is under effective regulations and over-the-counter medicines are well categorised, in Pakistan buying almost any type of medicine without prescription is easy. Many alarming outcomes like resistance, addiction, withdrawal effects, adverse drug interactions, and hypersensitivities are common due to self-medication and the availability to buy over-the-counter medicines in bulk. Clinics and pharmacies run by unauthorised medical practitioners are among the major causes of medication errors in the country. In the most populous province of Punjab, there were reportedly 70 000–80 000 unqualified quacks involved in illegal medical practice.

The economically compromised fraction of the general population prefers to visit quacks who do not charge them with a consultation fee. Some people rely on steroids in the form of unlabelled and unregulated medicinal preparations, provided by fake herbalists, homeopaths, and so-called traditional healers. In most cases, this behaviour leads to misdiagnosis, serious medication errors, and spread of infections.

According to WHO, 10 million people could die each year by 2050 in the absence of effective control measures against drug resistance. About 0.5 million people, including women and children, die each year due to medication errors in Pakistan.

The emergence of extensively drug-resistant typhoid should be considered a warning of pushing back the world to the pre-antibiotic era due to overuse of antibiotics.

Similarly, the unnecessary and irrational use of antibiotics in self-limiting viral infections is causing antibiotic resistance, especially in children.<sup>4</sup> During dengue virus outbreaks, patients could be at risk of developing serious complications due to the self-medication of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and aspirin, which are normally used at home for general fever and pain management, especially in rural areas.

The Pakistani Government has shut down 22 913 quackery outlets in the province of Punjab<sup>5</sup> and has decided in 2019 to regulate the sale of antibiotics in the federal capital, Islamabad.<sup>6</sup> However, the imposition of regulations regarding medicines of concern should be extended across the country. Over-the-counter medicines should be categorised uniformly across the country to minimise the unnecessary use of drugs.

All unprofessional quacks practising without appropriate authorisation must be addressed stringently through governmental interventions and control policies. Principally, improving the general public's awareness of the potential risks associated with self-medication and the differentiation between certified medical practitioners and quacks should be considered priorities.

It must be noted that some combinations of drugs can be dangerous. Self medication is a human behaviour in which an individual uses a substance or any exogenous influence to self-administer treatment for physical. Mahikan Khalid

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