

Patterns of Self-Medication with Over-the-Counter Pain Relievers (Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen, and Aspirin) among the Kuwaiti Population

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Abstract : Objectives: To estimate the prevalence of self-medication with over-the-counter pain relievers (acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and aspirin) among Kuwaiti citizens above the age of 16 years old and describe their patterns of use, perceived awareness of, and concerns about the drugs' potential side effects. Design: A descriptive cross-sectional questionnaire-based survey. Setting: Samples were selected from the six Kuwaiti governorates. Subjects: The data were collected over a four-month period in 2012, from 850 subjects who identified as Kuwaiti citizens. These subjects were recruited using stratified random sampling. Results: Overall, a 67% response rate was obtained. In total, 68% (573) of the respondents reported the use of over-the-counter pain relievers. Women, middle-aged or single individuals, and those who had completed higher education used these drugs more than any other subgroup ($p < 0.05$). We found evidence of inappropriate use of these drugs, with 15% (88) of the consumers using them almost daily. Further, 19% (111) of the consumers exceeded the recommended dosage at least once. Not only were 81% of the consumers unaware of the potential side effects, but also more than 61% were not concerned about them. Women were more knowledgeable than men regarding the maximum dose ($p = 0.036$, OR 1.49, CI 1.03-2.17). Consumers with higher levels of education did not show distinct knowledge regarding the maximum allowed dose of the drugs ($p = 0.252$, OR 1.71, CI 0.68-4.25). Conclusion: The results showed a high prevalence of self-medication with over-the-counter pain relievers among Kuwaiti citizens. The subjects showed marked unawareness and a lack of concern regarding the potential complications resulting from the inappropriate use of these analgesics. This demonstrates the need for educational interventions directed toward both patients and health care workers.

Keywords : awareness of side effects, concern, patterns of use, prevalence

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