SELF-MEDICATION AMONG HEALTHCARE WORKERS: INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

AUTOMEDICACIÓN ENTRE LOS TRABAJADORES DE LA SALUD: REVISIÓN INTEGRATIVA

Alessandro Fabio Oliveira¹, Eneas Rangel Teixeira², Zenith Rosa Silvino³, Bárbara Pompeu Christovam⁴

ABSTRACT
Objective: to identify the scientific knowledge produced about of self-medication among healthcare workers.
Method: integrative review, which sought to answer to the question << Which is the scientific knowledge produced about self-medication addressing healthcare professionals? >>. The databases LILACS, IBRCS, MEDLINE, REPDISCA, WHOLIS, and collection of the Library of the Pan American Health Organization/PAHO, Cochrane Library were consulted, searching for articles in Portuguese, English and Spanish, in the period from 2008 to 2012. The data were organized through the tables assessment. Results: thematic axes: the prevalence of self-medication; Motivational factors involved in the practice of self-medication; and Strategies confronting self-medication. Conclusion: it was noted the need to implement educational programs for the clarification of risks or harms to health, directed to health promotion, reflecting on best care to patients and reestablishing the practice of self-care with security. Descriptors: Nursing; Health Care Professional; Self-medication; Worker's health.

RESUMO

RESUMEN
Objetivo: identificar el conocimiento científico producido acerca de la automedicación entre los trabajadores del área de la salud. Método: revisión integrativa, que buscó respuesta para la pregunta << ¿Cuál es el conocimiento científico producido sobre la automedicación abordando los profesionales del área de la salud? >>. Fueron consultadas las bases de datos LILACS, IBRCS, MEDLINE, REPDISCA, WHOLIS y Colección de la Biblioteca de la Organización Pan-Americana de la Salud/PAHO, Biblioteca Cochrane, en busca de artículos en Portugués, Inglés y Español, en el periodo de 2008 a 2012. Los datos fueron organizados por medio de instrumento de evaluación por tablas. Resultados: ejes temáticos: La prevalencia de la automedicación; Factores motivacionales envueltos en la práctica de la automedicación; y Estrategias para enfrentamiento de la automedicación. Conclusión: se constató la necesidad de implementar programas educacionales para el esclarecimiento de riesgos o agravos a la salud, dirigido para promoción de la salud, reflexionando en mejores cuidados a los pacientes y reestableciendo la práctica del autocuidado con seguridad. Descriptores: Enfermería; Profesional de Salud; Automedicación; Salud del Trabajador.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of medicines available without a prescription is now accepted as an integral part of the health system. It meets the increasing desire of every individual to take responsibility for their own health. When practiced correctly, self-medication can also help to relieve public health systems financially, implying the autonomy of the subject and the autonomy of care. The consumption of non-prescription drugs is growing, driven by complex factors that are associated with the prevailing values in modern society, among them, are highlighted the increase in alternative medicines, availability and free sale and advertisements of pharmaceutical products in the media.

Self-medication is defined as the selection and use of medicines, allopathic or not, intended for the treatment of symptoms and diseases without gravity. The person assumes the full responsibility for the treatment, being important to know the medication is taking. Responsible self-medication is understood as part of the self-care actions, which can be targeted by principles: care of himself just from small illness or minor symptoms, diagnosed or already known; choose non-prescription medication only, preferably with the help of an enabled professional; always read the information from the product packaging before taking it; stop taking medication if symptoms persist. In this case, an enabled professional should be consulted.

Reports of professionals were found that have aggravated health conditions while maintaining the practice of self-medication of unsecured form and even cases of deaths due to self-medication, in which the medicine used could not be used in people with certain diseases. It emerges, then, the need to orient and educate nursing workers regarding the responsible use of self-medication.

OBJETIVES

- To identify the scientific knowledge produced about of self-medication among health care workers;
- To provide information to the scientific community regarding the practice of self-medication among health professionals;
- To identify which categories of drugs are most frequently used in this practice;
- To raise the conditional factors described using self-medication;
- To synthesize the proposals contributions derived from self-medication and its aspects.

MÉTODO

Descriptive study, conducted through an integrative review of the literature, which makes the synthesis and analysis of scientific knowledge ever produced on the subject investigated. Is an approach that allows the improvement of the quality of care provided to the patient and encourages the health professional to seek scientific knowledge through the research development or application in their practice of results found in the literature.

The question of this research study was << Which is the scientific knowledge produced about self-medication addressing healthcare professionals? >>. For this, it was used the base of the Virtual Health Library (VHL) and adopted the following inclusion criteria: temporal clipping of the last five years; available in its entirety online for free; published in Portuguese, English or Spanish; that approached self-medication theme related to health professionals or students from this area. In the exclusion criteria, fit the monographs, dissertations and theses.

The search in the bases of the VHL was performed using the key words nursing or healthcare professional and self-medication. The term health care professional is the synonym in Portuguese of the key word health personnel, according to the classification DeCS/MeSh.

1,350 items were found, from June 20th until July 12th, 2012, present on the following bases: On the basis of Latin American Literature and Caribbean Health Sciences (LILACS) were found 214 articles; on Spanish Bibliographic Index base in Health Sciences (IBECS) were found 42 articles; on the basis of International Literature in Health Sciences (MEDLINE) were found 1054 articles; in the Cochrane Library were found 22 items; on the basis of Literature in Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences (REPIDISCA) were found six articles; in the Collection of the Library of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) 06 articles were found; and on the basis of Library Information System (WHOLIS) were found six articles.

primarily 261 articles were extracted in full text, of which were analyzed as to availability and adherence to the theme proposed and applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria, remaining 20 articles in which 2 articles are indexed to MEDLINE bases, 02 articles to IBECS base and 16 articles LILACS database found.

The data were organized through tables assessment, facilitating the identification of structures of articles, consisting year of
The sources of the periodicals were diverse, encompassing 14 journals, totaling 20 studies analyzed. Among the periodicals are included those of the medical area, which contributed 40% and aimed at public health, responsible for 24% of the publications, which notes the interest in the medical field in keeping prescriptive power, giving dimension to medicine like chemotherapy, in which medical authority reigns. And it draws attention to a growing problem of public health, the self-medication. Nursing periodicals were 15%, which shows a growing issue tied to consumption and to several factors that lead this working class to such a practice.

National publications accounted for 85% of the studies, with a predominance of the Southeast region, corresponding to 47%, followed by the Northeast with 19%, southern region was found 14% of publications and the Midwest had 5%, situation related to the fact that these regions have academic training centers, being responsible for most of the research in the country. To international publications were found in the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia, which accounted for 5% of the studies, respectively.

It was verified that there is predominance for the areas most involved with drugs, being also relevant accompany diversification of different areas of knowledge on health, pointing to the possibility of dialogue and partnership between professionals in the health area, once the interdisciplinary work and the exchange of experiences can

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Studies of use of medicines: a summary of articles published in Brazil and Latin America;6</td>
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<td>Self-medication: unveiling the careless of nursing professionals;7</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Profile of medical students in self-medication for weight reduction;8</td>
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<td>Self-medication among the nursing workers of public hospitals;9</td>
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<td>Frequency of self-medication among academics from the University of medicine;10</td>
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<td>Self-medication: a qualitative approach of their motivations;11</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Study on self-medication in Spanish University Population;12</td>
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<td>Self-medication and health academic staff;13</td>
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<td>Self-medication in professionals in the areas of nursing and pharmacy in hospitals in the city of São José do Rio Preto-SP;14</td>
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<td>Health and occupational stress in doctors;15</td>
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<td>Medication storage and self-medication behavior amongst female students in Malaysia;16</td>
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<td>Self-medication in undergraduate academic health care of a private University in the southern state of Minas Gerais;17</td>
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<td>Headache as main cause of self-medication among the non-prescribers health professionals;18</td>
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<td>Headache in medicine and psychology students;19</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>Predisposing factors to the use of psychotropic drugs by nursing professionals;20</td>
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<td>Anti-obesity drug use among university students;21</td>
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<td>Health behaviors, care needs and attitudes towards self-prescription: a cross-sectional survey among Dutch medical students;22</td>
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<td>Self-medication in university students;23</td>
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<td>Evaluation of the use of topic nasal decongestants in university students from health sciences courses.24</td>
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Table 2. Distribution of studies according to education of the authors and year of publication in periodicals. Niterói, RJ, 2012

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Table 1. List of publications found in databases, regarding the year and title. Niterói, RJ, 2012

The following articles are organized by year and title corresponding to the search in databases (table 1).
collaborate in the reflection on the topic. It is worth mentioning the demand of articles which refer to self-medication is increasing constantly, supported in public policies for medicines, marketing restrictions. When reviewing the methodological approach of the studies it was identified that 03 (15%) used the qualitative methodological approach, 16 (75%) developed quantitative methods studies, 01 (5%) used the mixed qualitative and quantitative method and 01 (5%) did not inform the method employed. In studies with quantitative methodological approach, cohort methods were identified, descriptive, transversal and integrative review and survey. The quantitative research means turn opinions and information in numbers to allow classification and analysis, employing quantification since the collection of the information until the final analysis through statistical techniques, regardless of its complexity. To qualitative studies, the method adopted was the exploratory descriptive, in which the technique applied was the semi-structured interview in 02 studies and in group in 01 study. The qualitative methodological approach is a means to generate in-depth knowledge about the phenomena that constitute interest for the area to be explored.

**The prevalence of self-medication**

The studies proposed to verify the prevalence of self-medication point to high rates of this practice to relate with the habitual use of drugs. Lower rates of self-medication were found in the studies that did temporal clipping in this approach, asking about their practice in the last 7 days, 15 days or last month.

The total number of participants who responded to the study was of 3099 people, including quantitative and qualitative studies, having an average of affirmations for the question of self-medication in 45.12% of the responses, which corroborates with the world literature to find high rates in the practice of self-medication. The drugs are used for various cases as a way to get the solution of illness, giving the feeling of freedom and auto capacity of the subject to take ownership of his health. The reason the subject of studies make use of self-medication is targeted primarily for pain in general, giving prominence to the headache, respiratory diseases, fever, and symptoms of stress and anxiety.

It is noted that are employed as personal well-being justifications, the awareness of being treating minor illnesses without gravity or low importance, or most common emergency cases and to believe having extensive knowledge about the disease and the drugs that can be employed in such cases.

It was found that painkillers were the most cited, present in the results of 11 studies, followed by antipyretic and non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDS) cited in 06 studies. There is also the presence of medicines anxiolytics and antidepressants being referenced by 07 studies, fact concerning when it is self-medication with use of psychoactive substances, that their sale should be restricted to prescription. Are still found as sources of vitamins and self-medication vitamins and minerals cited in 04 studies, antiallergic, cold tablet, nasal decongestants, and antibiotics, all present with 03 quotes.

**Motivational factors involved in the practice of self-medication**

The use of drugs is moved by personal, cultural and family factors, among others, whose consumption of this symbol enables the materialization of health. Several factors to justify this practice. Self-medication is the result of a process in which various actors and activities are involved. This medication is inserted in the context of capitalist society, subject to tension, interests and competitions.

Individuals with higher education tend to self-medicate more in the belief of having greater knowledge. It is a common practice of the population, forming frequent users seeking information about medicines and treatments with family, friends, attendants who work in pharmacies, where there's a certain ease in achieving the desired medications, in the of pharmaceutical industry, using the internet or reading the bulla. It is present in all of the searched profiles, being notably higher in individuals who work in the area of health, female, to which these features common to the high education nursing workers.

Minor symptoms are treated through self-medication, in which individuals seek immediate solutions to their illness, through medicine that symbolizes health. The studies present diverse reasons for this practice, based often on user related to their environment, which suffers the influence of factors associated with the professional wear with the patient care, with emotional stress, irregular eating habits, impatience, irritability, poor quality of sleep, which generates a physical and psychological wear causing in dissatisfaction, inducing the...
demand for exhaust valves for such situations, such as denial and abuse.

It is observed that doesn’t show significant differences to those who use the public or private health care system, but there is increased prevalence on self-medication in individuals with higher household income, as these may have recourse to the purchase of medicines for their use, forming true residential pharmacies using later in cases with similar symptoms. 9,15,19-22

To seek the reasons for the subjects make use of self-medication, they allege that there is difficulty in being attend due to delay in hospitals, lack of time to search for attendance, poor quality in the service provided, which generates mistrust and insecurity in prescribing performed, carrying chronic diseases, being familiarized with the use of medicines or simply don’t feel need to seek specialized assistance. 5,9,11,12 The access to medicines to the populations with lower household income is still precarious contrasting with the ease of access to drugs, being controlled or uncontrolled as the psychoactive and antibiotics. This access has the collaboration of professionals who send prescriptions without making monitoring as prescriber or even they get the medicines with representatives of laboratories. 6,7,20

Drugs shall comply with the criteria established by the World Health Organization, which enumerates as features of a safe practice the efficiency, reliability, security, ease of administration and convenience.1 Fact worrisome found in studies on non-orientation, incorrect or incomplete guidance about the use of medicinal products, which is reflected in the misuse of these, when 50% of the medicines purchased are prescribed, dismissed or used erroneously, 50% buy medicines for only 01 day of treatment, high percentages ending early treatments, considering that it is no longer effective due to side effects or for forgetting to take the medication 5,6,10,16,22 cooperating so for the occurrence of Adverse Reactions to Medicines (ARMs), which elevate the hospital spending in 15 to 20%, as a result of the misuse of medications. 5,6,14,23-4

Professionals are aware of the neglect of the care of themselves, but they think it’s necessary that there are stimulus to health education, with guidance on the issues related to medicines and see lack of concern of the institutions and the own team in relation to the well-being of its professionals, and it is important the creation of individual and environmental protection factors. 7,18,20

∗ Strategies confronting self-medication.

Looking for measures that may elevate the practice of self-medication to acceptable levels of safety and responsibility is shared by the studies that compose this research.

It is concluded that self-medication is a frequent practice, high consumption, both in academia and in the professional environment, reaching all classes healthcare workers, universally, according to their cultures. 12,14,16,17,23 The method applied to store medications for later use is rarely appropriate.16

The pain is the most frequent cause pain to enforce the practice of self-medication, especially the headache, especially female, with painkillers and NSAIDS among the drugs most widely used in this context. 19,18

Self-medication is controversial about the benefits and harms, however, despite the possible serious complications, chronic users don’t intended to discontinue its use because the medicine is seen as solution of their problems. 9,15

Insufficient level of knowledge can cause unsatisfactory educational measures with regard to the use of medicines. The pharmacies are not seen as providing guidance for health, only as a marketplace, where many are advised by clerks or pharmacists, indicating which medicine to buy, but not guiding regarding safe practice. They still use old prescriptions, suggestions from friends, relatives or people who have already used such medicines.11,17,9,24

An important thing that corroborates with the OMS1 is the financial benefit of self-medication, because most participants claimed to have additional health care, not having as reference the Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde), but contributes to the relief of the public system, reducing the patients to be treated in this already ailing system.

Qualitative studies collaborate on understanding the perspective of the user of drugs, their relationships, expectations and difficulties. The exhausting work is associated with physical or mental diseases, together with consumption habits, perceptions and attitudes about the medicine. Not having a specialized professional assessment is seen as careless with their own health, but the professional relationship versus patient has been seen as a barrier to the advancement of this discussion, generating concern about the correct usage for health workers and their

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recommendations to patients, reflecting the bad personal use of the drug.\textsuperscript{6,7,11,13-4}

The information built by studies of use of medicines can contribute significantly to support the actions of assistance. For this, further studies are needed to characterize the usage pattern and infer that factors influencing practice, discuss the real importance of the theme and improve the effectiveness of health systems.

The authorities must persevere in the effort inadequate consumption risks newsletter, through policies more forceful to rational use, which must rely on the massive participation of the Government, industry and trade.

As sugestões de intervenção são unânimes ao destacarem a implementação de programas educacionais voltados tanto para a população quanto para os trabalhadores da saúde, desde seu início de formação acadêmica, para o esclarecimento de riscos ou agravos à saúde, com direcionamento para promoção da saúde, refletindo em melhores cuidados aos pacientes e reestabelecendo a prática do autocuidado com segurança.\textsuperscript{5,10,13-4,16,19,21,23}

Intervention suggestions are unanimous to deploy the implementation of educational programs geared for both the population as for healthcare workers, since their beginning in academic training for the clarification of risks or harms to health, with direction for health promotion, reflecting on best care to patients and reestablishing the practice of self-care safely.

**CONCLUSION**

Self-medication is present on the world stage, and for nursing workers, who work directly in the administration of medicines, generating knowledge and experience with its use becomes a tool of the health care aid, but can become a further loss, if performed without safety criteria. Adverse events associated with the consumption of drugs should be monitored through pharmacovigilance, which consists, among others, of procedures related to the detection, assessment, understanding and prevention of adverse reactions to medicines.

Poor working conditions are seen as encouraging factor for self-medication, as well as the absence of supplementary health care plan, difficulty to be serviced by the appropriate professional and mass media and health market in the influence of medicalization.

It is necessary a revalidation of self-care, since self-care negligence, give up the use of time for them staying at work, reference to concern about the indiscriminate use of self-medication. The studies come into consensus when addressing the educational factors which can contribute to a safer and self-medication for reducing risks. We see the need to develop health education campaigns for the reduction of risks and damages caused by self-medication.

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