Exploring self-medication amongst pharmacy patients in Kosovo

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**Background** Patient self-medication commonly affects medication adherence and overall therapeutic outcomes. Patient self-medication from community pharmacies in Kosovo is presumed to be common, however this issue has not been previously explored.

**Purpose** Explore self-medication in Kosovo pharmacy patients, including conditions, medications and potential implications.

**Method** This was a quantitative perspective study in which data was collected using a self-administered survey of pharmacists. This survey was distributed directly to pharmacies and pharmacists had the option of also self-administering the survey online. The survey included statements on Likert scale and its design was based on a literature review and also included open and closed ended questions. Data analysis was performed using the SPSS Vs 20 where initially descriptive analysis was performed followed by parametric and non-parametric tests to check variable associations.

**Findings** A total of 102 pharmacists were surveyed. Findings suggested that pharmacy patients in Kosovo commonly self-medicate with over 54% of surveyed pharmacists indicating that their patients self-medicate without prescription on daily basis. Out of medication groups requiring prescriptions in Kosovo, pharmacists reported that their request to supply medication without prescriptions is more commonly for contraceptives and antibiotics (mean agreement values on Likert scale: 4 and 3.8 respectively). Pharmacists indicated that they more commonly supply medicines without prescriptions for urinary tract and respiratory infections followed by insomnia (mean agreement values on Likert scale: 3.8, 3.5 and 3.2 respectively). According to majority of pharmacists (74%), patients in the age group between 31-45 years of age were more strongly associated with self-medicating (p<0.01) Previous disease diagnosis and parents self-medicating their kids were most common situations where patients require medicines without prescription (mean values on Likert scale: 4.09 and 3.57 respectively). This study also evaluated advantages, disadvantages and implications of self-medication for Kosovan patients.

**Conclusion** This study identified a high rate of self-medication in patients frequenting pharmacies in Kosovo. Findings highlight the need for a more proactive role that Kosovan pharmacists need to assume with the view of raising public awareness of self-medication implications.