

Help-Seeking Behavior and Self-Medication of a Population in an Urban Area in Turkey: Cross Sectional Study

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Aim. To define help-seeking behavior and self-medication among people with different symptoms and complaints in an industrialized urban area of Turkey.

Methods. This cross-sectional study was carried out in the city center of Kocaeli province, Western Turkey, in October-November 1998. To research help-seeking behavior in respect of secondary prevention and curative practices, we randomly selected households (N=812), interviewed the household members at their home, and recorded the reasons for visiting a pharmacy in 6 pharmacies (N=1,331 visits to pharmacy) in the Kocaeli region.

Results. The majority of the interviewed knew the meaning and importance of regular medical checkups, and only 7% had never underwent periodic checkups, mainly because of lack of interest or time. Self-medication was found to be the dominant mode of help-seeking behavior, especially in the case of pain. The proportion of unprescribed to prescribed drugs was 1:1.75, with analgetics, antipyretics, expectorants and antitussives as the most commonly requested unprescribed drugs.

Conclusion. A considerable amount of health care occurred within the popular sector, with self-medication and pharmacist's advice as dominant modes of behavior. The health care system should take this in account when planning activities aimed at detection of disease.

Key words: *helping behavior, life style; medically underserved area; medicine, traditional; prescriptions, drug; public health; social behavior; Turkey*

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