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RESEARCH

Self-medication practice among pension housed patients at the central healthcare unit of Teresina

Prática da automedicação entre pacientes hóspedes de pensões do pólo de saúde de Teresina

Práctica de automedicación entre pacientes huéspedes de pensiones del polo de la salud de Teresina

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ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To investigate the prevalence and characteristics of self-medication among pension housed patients at the central healthcare unit of Teresina in the downtown region. **Method:** This is an exploratory epidemiological study with a quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive approach. For data collection a semi-structured questionnaire was applied on the behaviors of 300 patients. **Results:** Of the total respondents, the practice of self-medication was common in 241 (80.33%) of individuals. The greatest achievement of this was seen in those coming from municipalities in the interior of Maranhao 116 (48.13%), which surpassed even that with a small gap the individuals from the interior of Piauí, to practice self-medication in 101 (41.91%). **Conclusion:** It is understood that self-medication is an old widespread practice. The search for relief from their ailments and the poor public healthcare offered to the population admits that individuals opt for self-medication as a first option. **Descriptors:** Self-medication, Education, Drug Sales.

RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Investigar a prevalência e características da automedicação entre os pacientes do Polo de Saúde de Teresina que se hospedam nas pensões da região central da cidade. **Método:** Trata-se de um estudo epidemiológico exploratório com abordagem quantitativa e descritiva transversal. Para coleta dos dados aplicou-se um questionário semi-estruturado, sobre os comportamentos de 300 pacientes. **Resultados:** Do total de entrevistados, a prática de automedicação foi comum em 241 (80,33%) dos indivíduos. A maior realização desta viu-se naqueles oriundos de municípios do interior do Maranhão 116 (48,13%), que ultrapassou ainda que com uma diferença pequena os indivíduos do interior do Piauí, com prática de automedicação em 101 (41,91%). **Conclusão:** Entende-se que a automedicação é uma prática antiga e largamente difundida. A busca por alívio de seus males e a carente saúde pública oferecida à população admite que os indivíduos lancem mão da automedicação como primeira opção. **Descritores:** Automedicação, Educação, Comércio de drogas.

RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Investigar la prevalencia y las características de la automedicación entre pacientes huéspedes de pensiones del polo de la salud de Teresina de la región central de la ciudad. **Método:** Se trata de un estudio epidemiológico exploratorio con enfoque cuantitativo y descriptivo transversal. Para la recolección de datos aplicado un cuestionario semi-estructurado sobre los comportamientos de los 300 pacientes. **Resultados:** Del total de encuestados, la práctica de la automedicación era común en 241 (80,33%) de los individuos. El mayor logro esto se vio los provenientes de los municipios de Maranhão 116 (48,13%), que sobrepasando incluso con un pequeño gap individuos del interior de Piauí, para practicar la auto-medicación en 101 (41,91%). **Conclusión:** Se entiende que la automedicación es una práctica antigua y generalizada. La búsqueda de alivio a sus dolencias y la mala salud ofrecidas a la población, admite que las personas se apoderan de la automedicación como primera opción. **Descriptores:** Automedicación, Educación, El comercio de drogas.

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INTRODUCTION

Self-medication is a phenomenon that has been widely studied and discussed in the pharmaceutical medical culture, especially by bringing major concerns in terms of public health in Brazil.<sup>1,2</sup>

It is a conduct whose initiative part fundamentally of a sick person, or their responsible, in consuming a product with the purpose of treating diseases or relief of symptoms.<sup>3</sup> Medical orientation is inappropriately replaced by requirements of medicines by unauthorized persons, such as friends, family or pharmacy attendants. Another common form of self-healthcare is oriented to self-medication, when previously issued prescriptions are reused, despite not being specified for continuous use usage.<sup>4</sup>

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there is no rational use of medications when patients receive appropriate medicines for their clinical conditions, in appropriate doses for their individual needs, for an appropriate period and at the lowest cost to them and to the community.<sup>5</sup>

In recent studies, it was shown that of the 22,165 cases of drug intoxication recorded by six Poison Control Centers, 2,263 (10.21%) were by anodyne medicines (dipyrone, paracetamol and salicylates). With these data, it is observed that even the medicines OTC and which are perhaps those with which the public are most familiar, they are not without risk.<sup>6</sup>

There are numerous reasons why people self-medicate. The rampant and massive propaganda of certain drugs contrast with the

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*Self-medication practice among pension...* timid campaigns that attempt to explain the dangers of self-medication, bring a major undesirable effects, masking and iatrogenic diseases in evolution, therefore, representing a problem to be prevented. With the objective of protecting the consumer, the control of advertising/promotion/advertising of medicinal products is regulated by the Resolution RDC no.102 since November of 2000, recently repealed by DRC 96/2008.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the various reasons for self-medication previously mentioned, you can still add the limitation of power, currently restricted to doctors; the excessive number of pharmacies in the large urban centers; the anguish and suffering caused by the symptoms, ease of access to information on the internet in search engines; lack of enforcement regarding the sale of prescription medicines and lack of educational programs concerning the effects of self-medication is often irreparable. It is impossible to curb this practice, therefore, it is necessary that society to adapt, receiving scientific information on OTC medicines, without stimulus to unrestrained consumption or the myth of miraculous healing, while being encouraged to search for a medical professional, emphasizing the positives that a medical consultation may have in relation to self-medication.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, in light of the scarcity of data on the self-medication practice with allopathic and homeopathic medicines in a specific population group, the low-income patients who seek treatments for many different diseases and staying in pensions of the main health center of Teresina, further studies are needed and are aimed at

Lopes WFL, Tapety FI, Mendes CMM *et al.* understanding the basic characteristics of self-medication practiced by those people who are treated in a conventional manner, but at the same time practicing allopathic, homeopathic or herbal self-medication. Thus the medicines used indiscriminately by such persons of fragile health, tend to occupy the first place among the causative agents of food poisoning. In this case, may be included both self-medication habit of buying medicines from pharmacies without a prescription, to the use of so-called potions, which makes this issue a public health problem.

For all that, this study aimed to assess the prevalence of self-medication among patients at eh Teresina Health Center staying in pensions of in the central city region.

METHODOLOGY

This research is in an exploratory cross-sectional epidemiological study with quantitative and descriptive approach. For data collection, interviews were carried out by means of a questionnaire with open and closed questions, about the knowledge and behaviors in relation to self-medication, in 300 patients in the age range of 18 to 70 years of age, of all races, from different social classes from cities in the interior of Piaui oor other states and were being monitored or not by the Family Health Teams of their respective cities, staying in hotels and pensions center of Teresina who came to this city in search of medical treatment and who agreed to sign the Instrument of Consent (IC). In each pension on average 3 guests were interviewed. The data

*Self-medication practice among pension...* processing was carried out using the program *PASW Statistics 18 (SPSS)* and the results were presented in tables for a better understanding.

The project was submitted for consideration by the Committee of Ethics of the University Center UNINOVAFAPI and approved under the CAAE of No 02512312.2.0000.5210.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 300 patients interviewed that were hosted in pensions located nearby the main healthcare center of Teresina-PI. The total number of interviewees 198 (66.00%) were female, presenting per average age 47 years of age. 219 (73,00%) of the respondents were married, 172 (57.33%) worked and 193 (64,33%) had as schooling from 1 to 8 years of study. The majority of participants, corresponding to 160 (53.33%) had a family income of 301 to 622 Brazilian reais. The number of respondents with health plan was 67 (22.33%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the population studied. Teresina (PI), Brazil, 2013.

		N	%	Average
Gender	Male	102	34.00%	47
	Female	198	66.00%	
Age				
Marital Status	Single	62	20.67%	
	Married	219	73.00%	
	Widowed	16	5.33%	
	Other	3	1.00%	
work	Yes	172	57.33%	
	no	128	42.67%	
Years of schooling	Illiterate	30	10.00%	
	1 a 8	193	64.33%	
	9 and over	77	25.67%	
Monthly Income (in Brazilian reais)	No income	27	9.00%	
	Up to 300	43	14.33%	
	301 a 622	160	53.33%	
	More than 622.1 years	70	23.33%	
Has Health Plan	no	233	77.67%	
	Yes	67	22.33%	
Total		300	100.00%	

Source: direct research

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Considering the origin of those interviewed who came to Teresina in search of medical treatment, there were 137 (45,67%) from cities in the interior of Piauí, 132 (44,00%) came from inland towns of Maranhão, 22 (7.33%) of the interior and a very small portion of 9 (3.00%) came from municipalities in other states, such as Bahia and Roraima.

In the total number of interviewees for the research, the practice of self-medication was common in 241 (80.33%) individuals. A maior realização desta por local de origem foi vista nos entrevistados oriundos de municípios do interior do Maranhão 116 (48,13%), que ultrapassou ainda que com uma diferença pequena os indivíduos vindos do interior Piauí, onde se teve o maior número de participantes na pesquisa. In this, the practice of self-medication there were 101 (41.91%). Then, came the municipalities from the inside of the For with 19 (7.88%) and from other states with 5 (2.07%) of the respondents. Its low index is justified due to the reduced number of participants in the study (Table 2).

Table 2. Self-medication by place of origin. Teresina (PI), Brazil, 2013.

Place of residence	Municipalities - interior of PI	Purchase of medicines without a prescription			
		Yes		no	
		N	%	N	%
	Municipalities - interior of PI	101	41.91%	36	61.02%
	Municipalities - interior of MA	116	48.13%	16	27.12%
	Municipalities - interior of PA	19	7.88%	3	5.08%
	Municipalities in other states	5	2.07%	4	6.78%
	Total	241	100.00%	59	100.00%

Source: direct research

In the study which identified the prevalence of medication use in adults in southern Brazil, which were observed in a sample of 3,182 individuals aged 20 years or older living in the urban area of the city of Pelotas, RS, Brazil. The J. res.: fundam. care. online 2013. dez. 5(6):151-159

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overall prevalence medication use was of 65.9%.

Where the groups that had higher prevalence medicines use rates after the analysis were women, elderly, individuals from higher economic level and with a worse self-perception of health. Having as the pharmacological groups most observed in the research: analgesic, anti-inflammatory and anti-hypertensive drugs.<sup>8</sup>

In this study, the results show that among the drugs bound in self-medication process, prevail analgesics (93.67%), anti-inflammatory drugs (87.00%), antibiotics (75.33%), medicines for cold or flu remedies (71.00%), syrups (67.33%), decongestants (14.67%), benzodiazepines (12.00%) and anti-allergic (9.33%) (Table 3).

Table 3. Medications - allopathic / homeopathic most commonly used in self-medication. Teresina (PI), Brazil, 2013.

		N	%
Analgesics	Yes	281	93.67%
	no	19	6.33%
Anti-inflammatory	Yes	261	87.00%
	no	39	13.00%
Syrups	Yes	202	67.33%
	no	98	32.67%
Asthma	Yes	2	.67%
	no	298	99.33%
Antibiotics	Yes	226	75.33%
	no	74	24.67%
Systemic corticosteroids	Yes	17	5.67%
	no	283	94.33%
Nasal corticosteroids	Yes	1	.33%
	no	299	99.67%
Decongestants	Yes	44	14.67%
	no	256	85.33%
Antiallergics	Yes	28	9.33%
	no	272	90.67%
Eardrops	Yes	12	4.00%
	no	288	96.00%
Cold / Flu medicines	Yes	213	71.00%
	no	87	29.00%
Topical for skin	Yes	11	3.67%
	no	289	96.33%
Muscle Relaxant	Yes	18	6.00%
	no	282	94.00%
Benzodiazepines	Yes	36	12.00%
	no	264	88.00%
Antidepressants	Yes	4	1.33%
	no	296	98.67%
Anticonvulsants	Yes	0	.00%
	no	300	100.00%

Source: direct research



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Thus the drugs used indiscriminately by these people of frail health, tend to occupy the first place among the causative agents of poisoning in humans who already have their bodies and especially their liver weakened by some morbidity.

For the acquisition of medicine through counseling with the pharmacy clerk, it was observed in our study that 97 (47.78%) of respondents from the interior of Maranhao, 82 (40.39%) of the interior of Piauí, 17 (8.73%) of the state of Para and 7 (3.45%) from other states were influenced during the purchase of medicines.

Potions and use of medicinal plants in the search for treatment of disease is a common and relevant to man process, which was widespread through the generations. With the study, it was found that 149 (49,66%) of the total respondents have already taken or take some phytotherapeutic. Where the greatest result for this practice was seen among respondents living in the interior of Piauí with a number of 68 (45.64%), followed of the respondents from the state of Maranhao, with 63 (42.28%). Of The total who used or uses such medicines, 110 (73.82%) knew about the nature of these compounds and could determine at least one existing in this plant. Of these, the highest percentage of respondents who reported this constitution, were among the individuals from Maranhao with 51 (46,36%), followed by the subjects of the interior of Piaui with 45 (40.91%) (Table 4).

Table 4. Use of phytotherapeutic medicines and the knowledge of his compositions by place of origin. Teresina (PI), Brazil, 2013.

Place of residence	Use of potions and other natural medicines				Knowledge of the nature of these compounds			
	Yes		no		Yes		no	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Municipalities - interior of PI	68	45.64%	69	45.70%	45	40.91%	23	58.97%
Municipalities - interior of MA	63	42.28%	69	45.70%	51	46.36%	12	30.77%
Municipalities - interior of PA	14	9.40%	8	5.30%	12	10.91%	2	5.13%
Municipalities in other states	4	2.68%	5	3.31%	2	1.82%	2	5.13%
Total	149	100.00%	151	100.00%	110	100.00%	39	100.00%

Source: direct research

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The paper entitled self-medication profile

in elderly participants from groups of seniors in a city in southern Brazil, found that 77 elderly respondents in their research, had many health problems and they used on average from 0 to 11 medicines. The majority (80.5%) were self-medicated, especially with OTC medications (analgesics) and medicinal plants. Being these alternatives adopted mainly by convenience and by considering their health problems are simple.<sup>9</sup>

Among the complaints that motivated self-medication in the results obtained by the study, can be highlight headaches (93.33%), fever (86.67%), colds (71.00%) and throat infections (61.33%) (Table 5).

Table 5. Morbidities that led to the practice of self-medication. Teresina (PI), Brazil, 2013.

		N	%
Headache	Yes	280	93.33%
	no	20	6.67%
Fever	Yes	260	86.67%
	no	40	13.33%
Flu/cold	Yes	213	71.00%
	no	87	29.00%
Inflammation/throat infection	Yes	184	61.33%
	no	116	38.67%
Inflammation/ear infection	Yes	20	6.67%
	no	280	93.33%
Sinusitis	Yes	31	10.33%
	no	269	89.67%
Rhinitis	Yes	7	2.33%
	no	293	97.67%
Allergies	Yes	29	9.67%
	no	271	90.33%
Skin Lesions	Yes	1	.33%
	no	299	99.67%
Oral Lesions	Yes	0	.00%
	no	300	100.00%
Diseases of the head or neck	Yes	8	2.67%
	no	292	97.33%
Reflux	Yes	49	16.33%
	no	251	83.67%
Other digestive complaints	Yes	68	22.67%
	no	232	77.33%
Pulmonary Diseases	Yes	0	.00%
	no	300	100.00%

Source: direct research

According to the data obtained in this study regarding the knowledge of the risks of self-medication by participants, 243 (81%) of the total number of respondents did not consider it safe take medicines on their own. Analyzing the percentage of those who had knowledge of this risk by place of origin, the result was 112 (46.09%) by

Lopes WFL, Tapety FI, Mendes CMM *et al.* individuals from the interior of Piauí, 106 (43.62%) for of Maranhao, 16 (6, 58%) for individuals coming from Para, lastly 9 (3.70%) to other states. With respect to the period of use of self-medication, of the total number of respondents 221 (73.66%) responded that they do so only for 01 day, 54 (18.00%) for 02 days, 14 (4.66%) for 03 to 05 days, 11 (3.66%) for more than 05 days.

The results obtained with respect to the provision of information by the Family Health Care Team about the improper use of medicines, it was observed that the total number of interviewed by the study, 136 (45.33%) stated they receive this monitoring of the health team, but 164 (54.66%) reported being unaided regarding this kind of care. By place of origin those who did not receive such information, stand out the individuals from the municipalities of Maranhao, with 88 (53.66%), followed by individuals from the interior of Piaui with 62 (37.80%) (Table 6).

Table 6. Provision of information about self-medication by the Family Health Team by place of origin. Teresina (PI), Brazil, 2013.

		Follow up by the family health team			
		Yes		no	
		N	%	N	%
Place of residence	Municipalities - interior of PI	75	55.15%	62	37.80%
	Municipalities - interior of MA	44	32.35%	88	53.66%
	Municipalities - interior of PA	10	7.35%	12	7.32%
	Municipalities in other states	7	5.15%	2	1.22%
	Total	136	100.00%	164	100.00%

Source: direct research

To shorten the paths for obtaining the relief of discomforts that afflict, on numerous occasions, before any symptoms, especially the more common as those arising from simple viruses, the Brazilian finds himself ready, driven to use the popular drugs for flu, fever, sore throat, etc., or to initially seek lay advice, is their most experienced intimate friends or relatives or even the pharmacist friend,

*Self-medication practice among pension...* in search for a solution drug. Television medium and various other means of communication and propaganda as the radio or "billboards" insist with their appeals to encourage everyone to adopt this posture.<sup>10</sup> In our case, the most justification mentioned by research participants to influence self-medication, resulted from the ineffectiveness of being reached by an effective public health system in their cities.

Before the actual intervention that occurs in pharmacies at the time of purchase of a medicinal product in the investigated group, as shown by the results, the research carried out in the city of Curitiba-PR, that it intended to investigate the knowledge and attitudes their community pharmacists in dispensing drugs to pregnant women. It was identified that they did not feel able to interpret information about the use of medications in pregnant women and do not have sources of reliable information on the topic. The study points to the need for a reorientation of the training of graduate and post-graduate studies in this area.<sup>11</sup>

Several studies analyzed the use of medications among different social categories of the population. Among these, was associated with the use of medications, the ideology of most favored classes, according to which the medicines would guarantee the "access" to health. Unlike these, the less favored classes used the medicines with the purpose of preserving their ability to work. Other studies go beyond, asserting among other points, that the use of medicines in Brazil conceals unequal patterns of morbidities among the different social classes.<sup>12</sup>

Another study suggests that self-medication in Brazil is practiced mainly by women, between 16 and 45 years of age. And among men, this practice is seen more frequently in the extreme ages. Also Shows that there is a greater care with the choice of drugs for children and the elderly, and that a

Lopes WFL, Tapety FI, Mendes CMM *et al.* large part of medicines were purchased for family use, which is understandable from the economic point of view.<sup>3</sup>

Another social group little mentioned in studies that deal with self-medication. It is the process of self-medication that occurs within Brazil. It is said that the poor access to health services and the extensive knowledge of traditional medicines, revealed, for example, a survey carried out in interior of Bahia, makes it impossible to put on the same line the consumption of modern medicines within and in the urban centers of Brazil.<sup>12</sup>

However, in a study that sought assess the use of medications in adults it says that the greatest use is exactly among the individuals with greater purchasing power. And it is emphasized that the practice of self-medication depends on the socioeconomic factor that can outweigh the actual need. It is well known that the health of individuals of lower socioeconomic status, in general, it is worse, and this could result in a greater use of medicines, but unlike this proposition is not checked with the realization of this study. It further states that this finding is consistent with the inverse care law in health, whereby people with reduced needs have more and better care.<sup>8</sup> In opposition, which occurs in our research shows the high practice of self-medication in individuals with low-income, which proves be fairly widespread practice is currently among the population, regardless of social class.

It was confirmed by a study that aimed to assess the prevalence of self-medication among children younger than five years in the municipalities of Caracol-PI and Garrafao do Norte-PA, Brazil. It was expected that the prevalence of self-medication in the two municipalities studied had been greater than other localities by low availability of health services and, especially, due to difficult access. This could encourage the

*Self-medication practice among pension...* provision of child medication without medical supervision. However, we must also highlight the low availability of medicines in the public sector in Caracol and Garrafao and especially as a result of poverty, lack of financial resources to acquire them from the private sector.<sup>13</sup>

The fact is that in Brazil there are few studies on the topic. It is even rarer to find articles discussing public policies with the aim of promoting interventions and strategies to prevent self-medication.<sup>13</sup>

CONCLUSION

From the data discussed, it is undeniable the importance of preventing self-medication in sick individuals, as an important factor in the quality of life of these people. It was observed that the search for relief from their ailments and poor health offered to the population admits that individuals consider self medication as their first and urgent option. However, using medications with no proper medical supervision can cause damage to the individual's health. The importance of awareness and education of the population on the risks of self-medication are extremely necessary, especially for a group socially vulnerable as is the case of those individuals who seek in Teresina, Brazil treatment for their ailments. Therefore, the data presented here demonstrate the need, in these cities, to increase the availability of medical services, facilitate geographical access to health services and create a campaign showing the risks of self-medication. It is proposed that public policies take effect for the control and supervision of medicinal products, as well as health promotion actions and especially on the medication responsible, under the pretense of rational use of drugs, involving the family health service and the community in general.



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