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Medication Literacy among Parents of Pediatric Patients in Southern India

Running title: Medication literacy among parents of pediatric patients

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Abstract

Patient safety is a major concern while administering medications, more so in the pediatric age group. Pediatric patients have specific needs in relation to medication administration. Adverse events resulting from administrative errors could be due to poor health literacy. In India, parents remain primary caregivers for children and are relied on to execute giving dosage and comprehending medication-related information in the interest of their child. Hence this study was planned to gain an understanding on parents' medication literacy.

An observational study was conducted amongst the parents visiting the community health centers associated with the institute. Interviews were conducted using a validated tool after obtaining informed consent. Following data collection, the participants were provided with a brief information about appropriate techniques to administer different formulations and standard precautions to be taken before dosing their children. Chi-square test was used to test for associations. A p-value of <0.05 was considered significant.

In the present study, parents' socioeconomic status was found to be significantly associated with purchasing medicines over-the-counter medicines for colds and cough ($p=0.048$). Parents' occupational status was found to be associated with the attitude that over-the-counter medicines were safe for children ($p=0.017$), children can be given the same medicines for a particular illness as adults ($p=0.018$), alternatives for medicines that were suggested by pharmacists were safe if medications prescribed by the doctors were unavailable ($p=0.008$), and parental occupation was also associated with practice surrounding storage of liquid medicines ($p=0.003$).

Patient education is of paramount importance to spread awareness about medication usage. Health professionals need to be sensitized regarding the lack of knowledge and malpractices among parents which unwittingly may harm their children. This study has identified knowledge gaps and potentially harmful practices.

Key words: Medication literacy, pediatric patients, knowledge, medication errors, patient education

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