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Drug treatment of common childhood symptoms in Nnewi: what mothers do?

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES: To determine how mothers treat common childhood symptoms before hospital attendance in Nnewi.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: Information was obtained from 211 consecutive mothers on their children's presenting symptoms, drugs administered, source of the drugs, persons who prescribed the drugs, number of drugs administered, prior to hospital attendance through a structured questionnaire administered by the authors.

RESULTS: A combination of fever, cough and catarrh topped the list of presenting symptoms in 87 (41%) of the patients while fever and diarrhea had the least frequency of 16 (7.6%). One hundred and five or 52% of the mothers decided on the drugs that were administered followed by patent medicine dealers who accounted for 59 or 29.2%. Trained health professionals whom mothers consulted before bringing their children to hospital were responsible for 28 (13.8%) of the prescriptions. Patent medicine stores were the sources of 90.6% of the drugs while health facilities accounted for 8.4%. The frequency chart of prescribed drugs were analgesics 166 (34.9%), hematinics 88 (18.5%), antibiotics and antimalarials 81 (17.1%) and 74 (15.6%) respectively while antidiarrheals and ORT were least administered with 7 (1.5%) and 1 (0.2%) respectively. The children received an average of 2.7 drugs per prescription.

CONCLUSION: With the high prescription rate of mothers for sick children at home, there is need for effective methods to educate mothers on the use and potential dangers of home medication.

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