

THE MOST COMMONLY USED MEDICINES BY MEDICAL STUDENTS FOR SELF-MEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

Self-medication is a common and worrying practice, especially among medical students, which involves the use of medications without a prescription. This study aims to identify the drugs most commonly used by these students, with a special focus on psychiatric drugs used for anxiety, depression, and ADHD. The research was conducted through a literature review, covering articles published between 2018 and 2024, and focused on studies conducted in Brazil. Articles related to self-medication in medical students were used as inclusion criteria, and articles that did not mention which drugs were used were excluded. The descriptors used were "Self Medication," "Students," "Medical," and "Psychiatric drugs." The results indicate that the most commonly used drugs include antipyretics, analgesics, benzodiazepines, and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, such as fluoxetine and escitalopram. The indiscriminate use of these drugs without a proper medical prescription can pose significant health risks, highlighting the need for educational interventions and targeted public health policies.

Keywords: self-medication; medical students; psychiatric drugs; anxiety; depression; ADHD.

INTRODUCTION

Self-medication, defined as the use of medications on one's own without a prescription from a healthcare professional, is a common practice that can lead to serious health risks. Studies show that this practice is especially prevalent among medical students, who often have easy access to medications and sufficient knowledge to identify symptoms, but not always to adequately assess the risks and benefits of using certain drugs (Medeiros et al., 2022). In Brazil, self-medication is historically rooted and encouraged by factors such as easy access to information and medications, as well as the search for quick solutions to health problems (Lázaro et al., 2020).

METHOD

This study was conducted through a literature review of articles published between 2018 and 2024. The databases used included *PubMed*, *Scielo*, and the Virtual Health Library (BVS). Articles related to self-medication in medical students were used as inclusion criteria, and articles that did not mention the drugs used were excluded. The descriptors used were "Self Medication," "Students," "Medical," and "Psychiatric drugs." The objective was to identify the drugs most commonly used in self-medication by medical students in Brazil, with an emphasis on psychiatric drugs for anxiety, depression, and ADHD.

RESULTS

The main drugs used in self-medication by medical students in Brazil are presented in the following tables.

Table 1: Main drugs used in self-medication in Brazil.

Study	Year	Medications	Most Used
Tebet et al.	2	Dipyrone, paracetamol	
Silva et al.	2022	Analgesics, anti-inflammatory drugs	
Kramer et al.	2020	Analgesics, AINEs, sedatives/hypnotics	
Terezani et al.	20	Antipyretics, anti-inflammatory drugs, analgesics, antibiotics, CNS stimulants	
Maffessoni & Pitanga	2022	Various, prevalent among health students	

Source: Adapted from Souza (2021), Marinho et al. (2019), Peres et al. (2023), Dokkedal-Silva et al. (2020) and Amaral et al. (2021).

Table 2: Self-medication with psychiatric drugs in Brazil.

Study	Year	Medications	Most commonly used
Souza	2021	Anxiolytics (benzodiazepines), antidepressants	
Marinho et al.	2019	SSRIs (fluoxetine, escitalopram)	
Peres et al.	2023	Antidepressants	
Dokkedal-Silva et al.	20	Benzodiazepines (for anxiety and insomnia)	
Amaral et al.	2021	Antidepressants (escitalopram, fluoxetine) and anxiolytics	

Source: Adapted from Souza (2021), Marinho et al. (2019), Peres et al. (2023), Dokkedal-Silva et al. (2020) and Amaral et al. (2021).

CONCLUSION

Self-medication among medical students in Brazil is a prevalent and potentially dangerous practice, particularly in the use of psychiatric drugs such as antidepressants and anxiolytics. The high prevalence of this practice highlights the need for educational interventions and public policies aimed at reducing the associated risks and promoting the rational use of medications, especially in contexts of high academic pressure.

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