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## Evaluation of the Effect of Self-Medication among Professional Health Workers in Abuja

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### Abstract

**Objectives:** This study aims to assess the prevalence, types, and motivations for self-medication among healthcare professionals in Abuja, Nigeria.

**Design:** A cross-sectional survey.

**Setting:** Selected hospitals in Abuja, Nigeria.

**Participants:** 348 healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and pharmacists, who provided informed consent, participated in the study.

**Intervention:** No specific interventions were implemented in this study. However, the study underscores the need for educational programs to address the risks of self-medication among healthcare professionals in Abuja.

**Primary and Secondary Outcome Measures:** The study examines self-medication prevalence, types of medications

used, motivations for self-medication, and its impact on professional performance and healthcare quality.

**Results:** The findings reveal that 59.8% of participants reported rarely self-medicating, while 23.6% self-medicated on a weekly basis, 14.7% self-medicated monthly, and only 1.7% self-medicated daily. The study indicates moderate levels of self-medication among healthcare professionals, raising concerns about its implications for healthcare quality.

**Conclusions:** The study underscores the necessity for targeted interventions to enhance adherence to guidelines and promote safer healthcare practices in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Self Medication, Health Personnel, Drug Misuse, Pharmaceutical Preparations, Nigeria

### Introduction

Self-medication refers to the practice of treating one's health issues without professional consultation, including taking drugs to address self-diagnosed conditions or continuing prescribed medication for recurring health problems. According to the World Health Organization (WHO 2000), self-medication involves using drugs without the guidance of a healthcare professional. It is common in low and middle-income countries, often due to factors such as a shortage of healthcare professionals, high drug costs, and limited access to healthcare services. Studies have shown that the prevalence of self-medication is particularly high in developing countries. In a systematic review of 34 studies across developing countries, it was found that 38.8% of people self-medicate with antimicrobial drugs, with the rates varying significantly from 4.0% in Yemen to 91.4% in Nigeria<sup>[1]</sup>.

Self-medication practices, while common, have a range of consequences. The misuse of antibiotics, for example, contributes to the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance, especially in regions with frequent non-prescription drug use. Although self-medication is often seen as a cost-effective and convenient alternative to professional healthcare, it can also lead to serious health risks, including adverse drug reactions, drug dependency, and masking of symptoms for more serious conditions. Healthcare professionals, despite being well-informed about these risks, are not immune to self-medication. Studies from

countries like the United States, the UK, and Australia show that self-medication rates among healthcare workers range from 39% to 99% [2]. This raises significant concerns about the potential impact on both personal health and professional conduct, as self-medication can hinder accurate diagnosis and treatment of patients.

Given the potential consequences, it is essential to understand the extent, motivations, and implications of self-medication among healthcare professionals, especially in regions like Abuja, Nigeria, where healthcare delivery faces unique challenges.

### Methods

This study was conducted in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria, from January to May 2024. The study focused on self-medication among healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and pharmacists, using a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to healthcare professionals in selected hospitals across the FCT.

### Results

The results indicate a moderate prevalence of self-medication among healthcare professionals in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). A total of 348 healthcare professionals participated in the study. Of these, 59.8% reported rarely self-medicating, while 23.6% self-medicated on a weekly basis, 14.7% self-medicated monthly, and only 1.7% self-medicated daily. The most commonly used medications for self-medication included over-the-counter drugs, antibiotics, and pain relievers, with a significant portion of respondents citing convenience and time constraints as the primary motivations for self-medication. Furthermore, the study revealed that healthcare professionals often resorted to self-medication due to easy access to medications and their familiarity with drug types. Interestingly, despite the high awareness of potential risks such as drug interactions and resistance, a considerable proportion of participants did not adhere strictly to professional guidelines regarding medication use. The most commonly reported challenges included uncertainty about the efficacy of over-the-counter medications and concerns about possible health risks associated with frequent self-medication.

### Discussion

The findings from this study provide significant insights into the prevalence and motivations for self-medication among healthcare professionals in Abuja. The moderate levels of self-medication suggest a concerning trend, as even those who are aware of the risks involved may still engage in this practice due to convenience, time constraints, and access to medications. The study also highlights the need for greater adherence to established professional guidelines, as many respondents did not consistently follow the recommended practices for safe medication use.

Furthermore, the relatively low levels of concern regarding health risks associated with self-medication underscore the importance of raising awareness among healthcare professionals about the potential dangers of this practice. The study suggests that the effectiveness of current well-being initiatives could be improved, and it calls for the development of targeted interventions to promote safer self-

medication practices and encourage the use of alternative coping strategies to reduce reliance on medications.

### Conclusion

This study reveals that self-medication is a moderate yet prevalent practice among healthcare professionals in Abuja, influenced by factors such as convenience, access to medications, and time constraints. While the impact on healthcare quality appears limited, the risks associated with self-medication warrant increased awareness and interventions. To improve adherence to professional guidelines and promote safer healthcare practices, targeted educational programs and enhanced well-being initiatives are necessary. In addition, the study advocates for the promotion of alternative stress management strategies to reduce the need for self-medication among healthcare professionals.

### Data Availability

The data supporting this study are available at Zenodo with the DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13910057>.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no financial, personal, or professional conflicts of interest related to this research.

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