

The impact of law enforcement on dispensing antibiotics without a prescription on primary care physicians

Fouad Alshubayshiri*, Ali Darraj

Department of Medicine, College of Medicine at Shaqra, Shaqra University, KSA

* Presenting Author

Introduction:

The government of Saudi Arabia implemented a law to enforce the law and regulations prohibiting the dispensing of antibiotics without a prescription, and studies have been conducted to assess the impact of such a law in Saudi Arabia. However, the extent to which law enforcement has changed the perceptions and attitudes of healthcare professionals, mainly physicians, towards antibiotic resistance is unknown in Saudi Arabia.

Methods:

A cross-sectional study was conducted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 378 physicians. These physicians were mainly working in primary care centers. An online questionnaire was sent to the physicians, and it consisted of 35 items and was divided into four sections: 6 items were on sociodemographic characteristics of participants; 13 items were on the knowledge of physicians about antibiotic resistance; 8 items were on the attitude the physicians toward enforcement law, and the final eight items were on the attitude the patients toward enforcement law in an outpatient setting.

Result:

Around 90% of the physicians acknowledged that physicians should stop prescribing antibiotics without indication. About 29% of the physicians agreed, and 56.3% showed strong agreement that law enforcement is for the patient's benefit. Similarly, 33.6% agreed, and 50.8% strongly agreed that law enforcement limits the resistance of bacteria. Around 24.3% of the patients disagreed, and 23% strongly disagreed that law enforcement does not affect anything. Around one-third of the physicians (34.4%) agreed, and 23.5% strongly agreed that the new regulation of law enforcement of antibiotic prescription increases public awareness regarding the misuse of antibiotics.

Conclusion:

This study shed light and provided novel insights on the attitudes and practices of physicians towards law enforcement on dispensing antibiotics without prescription antibiotics. The study revealed that most physicians agreed that law enforcement is for the patient's benefit and that law enforcement limits the resistance of bacteria. This may imply that physicians value the importance of the law against spreading antibiotic resistance. However, not all physicians agree with the idea that the law will prevent dispensing antibiotics without a prescription, and the reasons for this need to be evaluated in the future. However, physician majority of physicians agreed that the new regulation of law enforcement of antibiotic prescription increases public awareness regarding the misuse of antibiotics.

This cross-sectional study was undertaken to assess the attitude and perceptions of physicians about antibiotic resistance after law enforcement. The study findings show that about three-fourths of the physicians think that there are some people that can reach the antibiotic without a prescription. This suggests that law enforcement may not have a significant impact on the change in behavior of individuals.

While assessing physicians' attitudes while prescribing antibiotics, we found that 73.0% of the physicians always ask about drug allergies before prescribing antibiotics. The findings suggest that a quarter of physicians may need to be trained to assess allergies before prescribing antibiotics. These findings call for action to train physicians and remind them to check for potential allergies before prescribing any drug. It may be practically challenging to ensure that 100% of physicians should ask questions about allergies at least after law enforcement. However, our findings show that a reasonable proportion of the physicians check for allergies as opposed to studies conducted in Spain and Jordan, where only 16.9% and 17.3% of the pharmacists explored allergies before the prescription of antibiotics, respectively

References:

1. Bell BG, Schellevis F, Stobberingh E, Goossens H, Pringle M. A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of antibiotic consumption on antibiotic resistance. *BMC Infect Dis.* 2014;14:13.
2. Alaqeel S, Abanmy NO. Counselling practices in community pharmacies in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: a cross-sectional study. *BMC Health Serv Res.* 2015;15:557.

