

Risks of Self-Medication

Miguel Camilleri, Maresca Attard Pizzuto, Lilian M Azzopardi

Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

email: miguel.camilleri.17@um.edu.mt

INTRODUCTION

The relevance and impact of self-medication in the primary healthcare system is an area that receives focus as a means to empower patients and increase efficiency in the healthcare ecosystem.

AIMS

To determine the prevalence and the risks associated with self-medication practices from the perspective of customers, medical practitioners and pharmacists.

METHOD

Two questionnaires aimed towards the general public and health care professionals, regarding the risks of self-medication, were developed as seen in Figure 1 and validated

Questionnaires were disseminated through social media and by hand

Data analysis

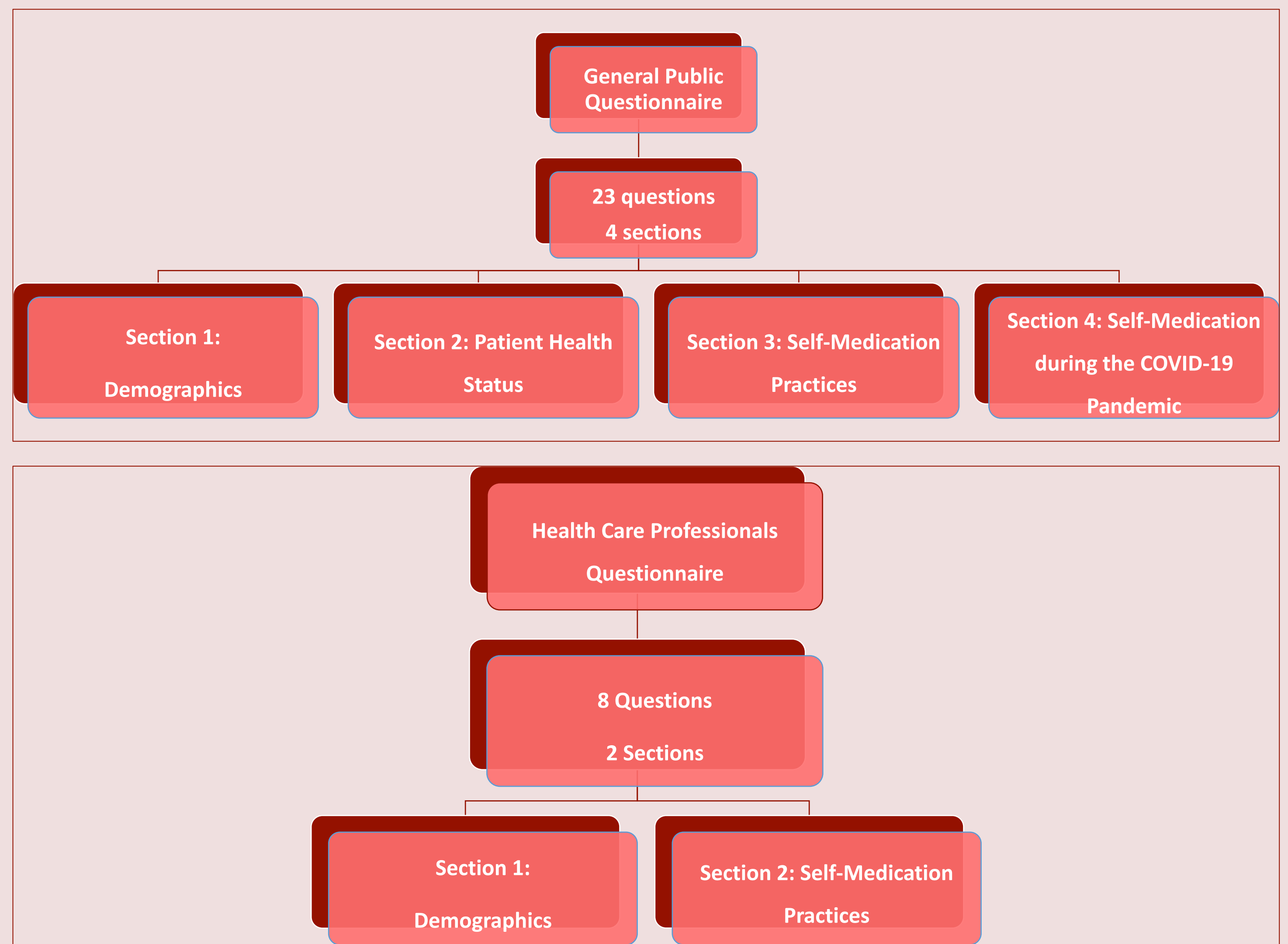


Figure 1: Questionnaires' Structure

RESULTS

- The general public's questionnaire was answered by 261 participants of which 71% (n=184) were female and 77% (n=201) admitted to self-medicating with the main reason being that the illness was minor (62%, n=163).
- The most popular type of medication used for self-medication was cough syrups (82%, n=165) (Figure 2) whilst the main risk identified by the public was the incorrect diagnosis (56%, n=146).
- The correlations between level of education and patients knowing the meaning of self-medication (p=0.039) and patient's level of education and whether or not they self-medicate (p=0.022) were statistically significant.
- The healthcare professional's (HCP) questionnaire was answered by 66 participants of which 58% were female (n=38) and 55% were doctors (n=36).
- The main reason HCP believed patients self-medicate was due to acute minor conditions (74%, n=49) whilst menstrual pain and cough and common cold were the main medical issues HCP think patients opt to self-medicate for (74%, n=49).

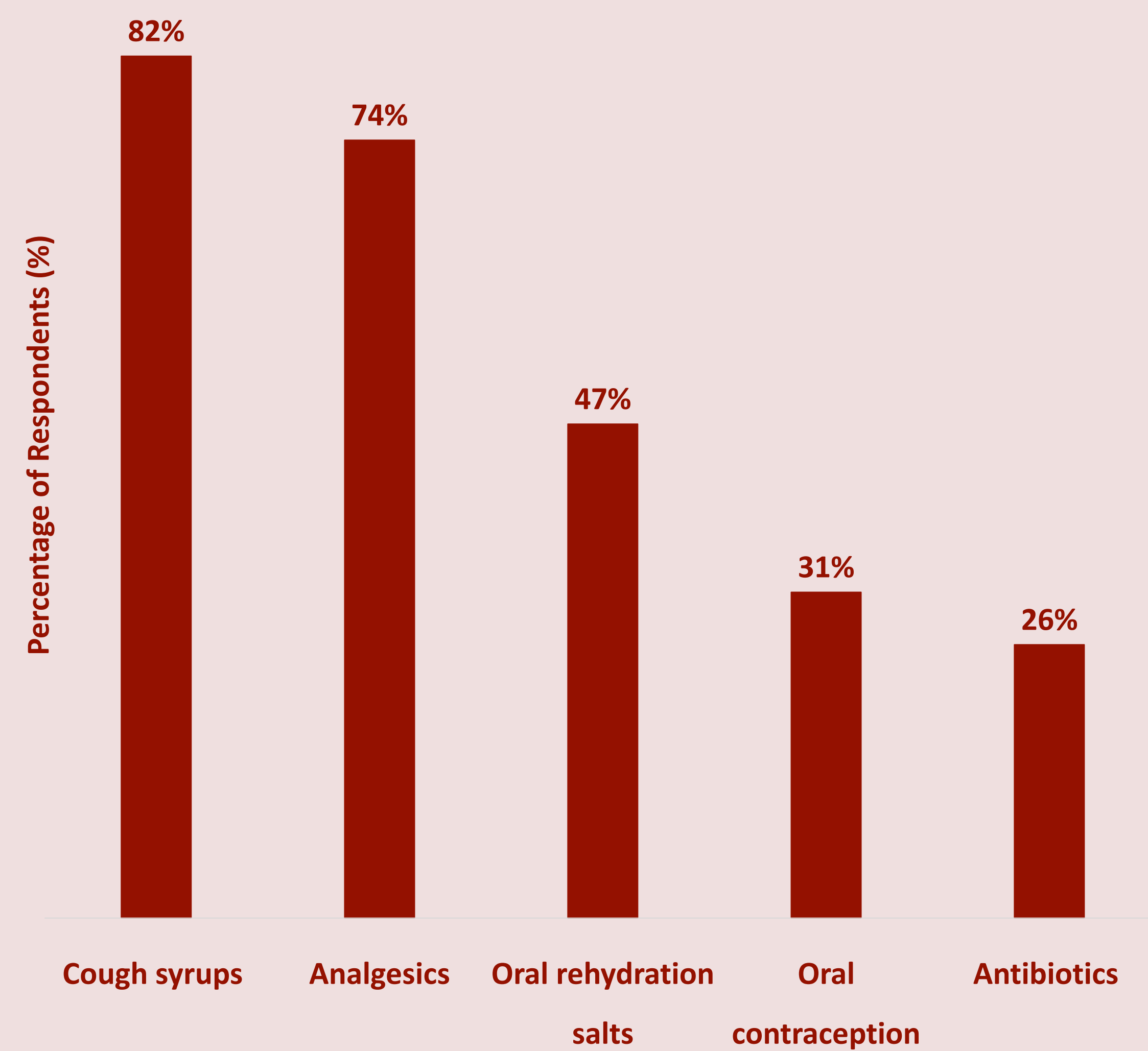


Figure 2: Medications the general public is self-medicating with (N= 201)

CONCLUSION

The general public is self-medicating, with the main reason being that the illness was minor. Healthcare professionals reported that access to medical facilities may be a driving factor for self-medication. Further studies could be undertaken to assess risks associated with self-medication in terms of misuse of medication or delay in seeking medical advice.