

Title: Antibiotics for upper respiratory infections: public knowledge, beliefs and self-medication in the Republic of Macedonia

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By: IVANOVSKA, Verica (University Goce Delcev, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Å tip, Macedonia)

Co-author(s): Zdravkovska, M. (University Goce Delcev, Å tip, Macedonia)
Angelovska, B. (University Goce Delcev, Å tip, Macedonia)

Abstract:

Background: : Self-medication as part of the irrational use of antibiotics contributes to the spread of antimicrobial resistance. However, systematically collected information on resistance rates and antibiotic use, including self-medication, are scarce in Macedonia. **Aim:**The aim of this first community-based survey in Macedonia was to determine public’s knowledge, beliefs and self-medication with antibiotics for upper respiratory infections. **Methods:**A cross-sectional study was conducted in three administrative regions in Macedonia in April 2012. The eligible 402 participants were asked to answer an anonymous questionnaire. **Results:** Our respondents demonstrated relatively low level of public knowledge about antibiotics and upper respiratory infection treatment in comparison to the EU countries. The study found that 71.4% of our participants stored antibiotics at home, and 43.3% purchased OTC antibiotics in the last year, despite the national regulation that restricts antibiotics as prescription-only medicines. Actual self-medication with antibiotics for upper respiratory infections was reported in 18.3% of adults and 1.8% of children aged 0-4 years. **Conclusions:** : Our results put us in the group of eastern and southern EU countries which have the highest rates for non-prescription use of antibiotics in Europe. Therefore, multifaceted interventions aiming to prevent self-medication should include: enforcement of regulations that restrict OTC sales of antibiotics, monitoring of antibiotic use and antimicrobial resistance rates and public education activities.