Jundishapur J Health Sci. 2026 January; 18(1), 1-2 https://jjhs.ajums.ac.ir /
https://doi.org/10.22118/jjhs.2026.242698 Editorial

Self-Medication and Excessive Use of Antibiotics and Herbal Medicines: A Growing Public Health Concern

Marzieh Araban[1,2,3]*

۱.Menopause Andropause Research Center, Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Iran.
۲. Department of Health Education and Promotion, School of Public Health, Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Iran
۳. Food and Drug research center, Food and Drug Administration, Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Tehran, Iran

*Corresponding Author
E-mail: arabanm@ajums.ac.ir - araban62@gmail.com

Editorial

Self-medication and the excessive use of pharmaceuticals, including antibiotics and herbal remedies, have become important public health concerns worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that total national consumption of antibacterials, expressed as Defined Daily Doses (DDD) per 1000 inhabitants per day, is a key measure of antibiotic use and trends in antimicrobial resistance[1]. In Iran, data indicate that antibacterial consumption is increasing each year, reflecting a growing public health challenge[1]. At the same time, the common belief that herbal products are inherently safe has encouraged their use without professional guidance, which may lead to adverse effects or interactions with other medications[2].

Studies from Iran show that self-medication is influenced by multiple factors. Karimian et al., for example, found that positive attitudes toward self-medication, previous experiences with illness, and easy access to medications contribute to self-medication practices[2]. Similarly, Karimy et al. reported that women's self-medication behaviors are shaped by attitudes, social norms, and perceived control over the behavior [3]. Overall, the easy availability of medications and the assumption that herbal remedies are completely safe appear to reinforce self-medication. These findings underline the urgent need to improve public knowledge about safe medication practices and promote health literacy regarding the use of both conventional and herbal medicines.

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Artificial intelligence tools were used solely to assist with language editing, grammar correction, and text suggestions. The authors have carefully reviewed, revised, and approved all content, and take full responsibility for the scientific accuracy, analyses, and conclusions presented in the manuscript.

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