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Uncontrolled use of antibiotics in the treatment of uncomplicated urinary tract infections by Albanian community pharmacists

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Objectives : It is a well known phenomenon in Albania that prescription drugs are dispensed over the counter in the community pharmacies. The aim of this study is to document the attitude of community pharmacists to fulfill the concept of pharmaceutical care and to evaluate how they manage a case of acute uncomplicated lower urinary tract infection.

Methods : 28-eight community pharmacists in North Western Albania (Lezhe, Lac, Shkoder) were presented with a patient claiming urinary tract infection and seeking medical treatment.

Results : Only 5 pharmacists (17 %) refused to dispense medications without prescription. Seven others (25%) dispensed urinary antiseptic only and sixteen (57%) gave antibacterial agents. Fluoroquinolones were the most commonly dispensed (69% as first choice and 87% as an alternative) followed by co-trimoxazole, penicillins, cephalosporins and tetracyclines. The number of drugs dispensed ranged from a single agent at 15 (54%), 2 drugs at 8 (28%) and 3 drugs at 5 (18%) pharmacies. The average cost was Albanian Lek (ALL) 1500 (\$11.9) for first choice drugs and ALL 1000 (\$ 7.9) for the alternatives.

Conclusions : The heavy dispensing of fluoroquinolones over the counter could eventually lead to increased resistance of the pathogenic bacteria to these drugs. However, despite the lack of pharmacist's adherence to the pharmaceutical law, this study does not indicate that they had abused their patients. It is rather demonstrating the urgent needs for successful implementation of the pharmaceutical law taking into consideration better integration between governmental health providers and the private community pharmacies. In addition, it supports calls to educate pharmacists to perform basic clinical assessment in the community pharmacy, as a vital tool to effectively manage their patients' health status.

Keywords : pharmacist, urinary infection, medical education