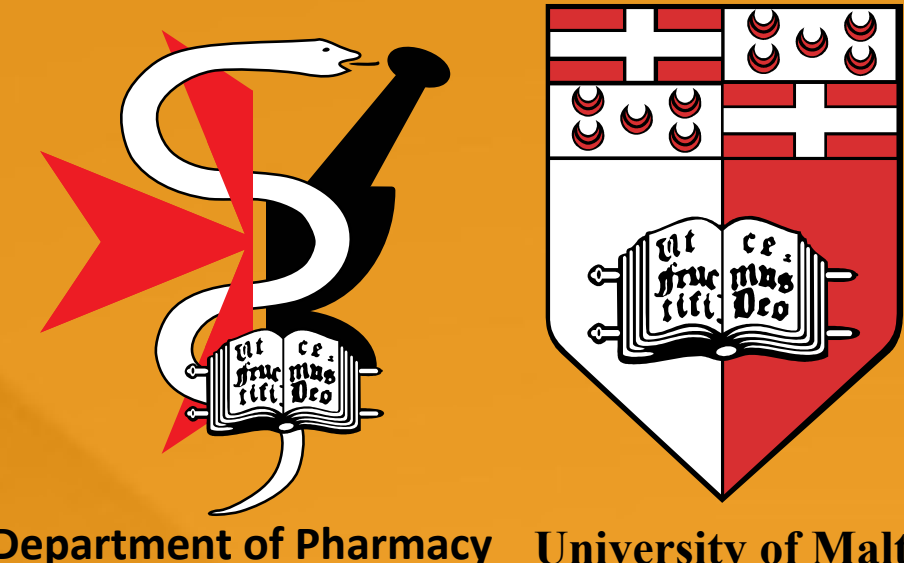


Optimising Patient Self-Medication Through the Community Pharmacist

Andrew Fenech, Louise Grech, Lilian M. Azzopardi

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

email: andrew.fenech88@gmail.com



Department of Pharmacy University of Malta

INTRODUCTION

Self-care with 'Over-the-Counter' (OTC) medicines is a widespread practice. Patients consider OTC medicines to be safe and frequently ignore patient information leaflets. This incurs certain risks on patients' health. Facilitated self-medication addresses this issue, whereby the pharmacist is directly involved in providing advice on self-medication products.

AIM

To optimise patient safety and pharmacotherapy related to self-medication through the community pharmacist's intervention.

The objectives were to investigate the nature and frequency of drug-related problems (DRPs) occurring in self-medication and to document the interventions carried out by the pharmacist in relation to the DRPs.

METHOD

A data collection tool required to run the research was compiled and validated. Ethics approval was sought and granted from the University of Malta Research and Ethics Committee (UREC).

203 patients presenting at a community pharmacy asking for OTC medications, who were over 18 years of age and able to understand English and Maltese were included in the study.

The pharmacist-researcher recorded data on patient characteristics and the nature of the OTC medicine request.

Any identified DRPs were documented, together with the action taken by the pharmacist to resolve the identified DRPs. The time needed for resolving the problem was recorded.

RESULTS

- A total of 40 DRPs were detected in 18.71 % of patients presenting with requests for OTC medicines.
- The most common DRP was 'requested medicine is not optimal for symptoms presented' (32.5%), followed by 'requested medicine is contra-indicated' (27.5%) and 'duplication of medicines' (12.5%) (Figure 1).
- The most common drugs implicated with DRPs were the NSAIDs followed by decongestants and both topical preparations and compound analgesics (Figure 2).
- The most frequent intervention (57.5%) was to change to a more suitable drug, followed by referral to a physician (22.5%).
- The pharmacist solved 32 DRPs (80%). 7 DRPs (17.5%) were partially solved and 1 DRP (2.5%) was not solved.

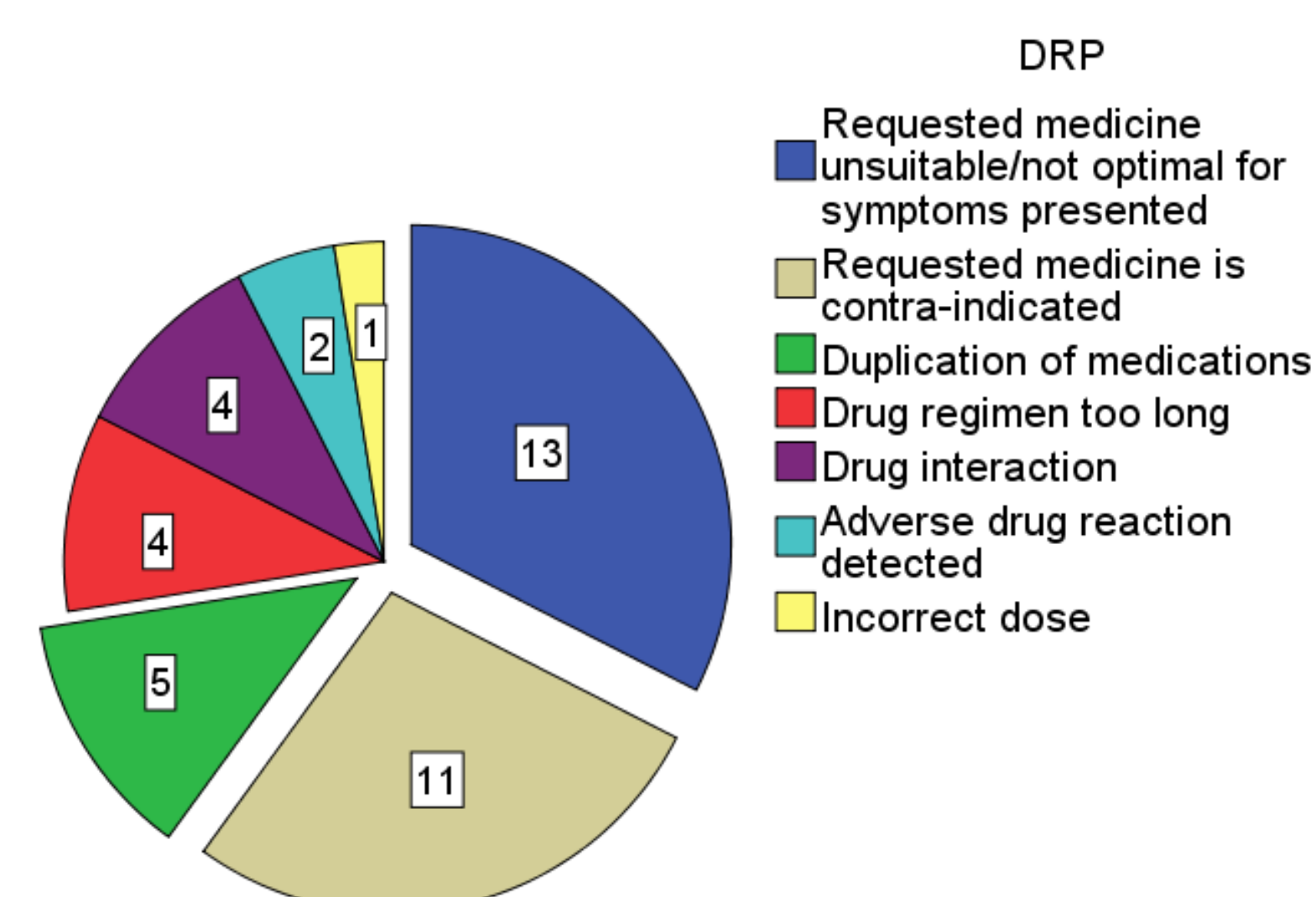


Figure 1: DRPs detected (n=40)

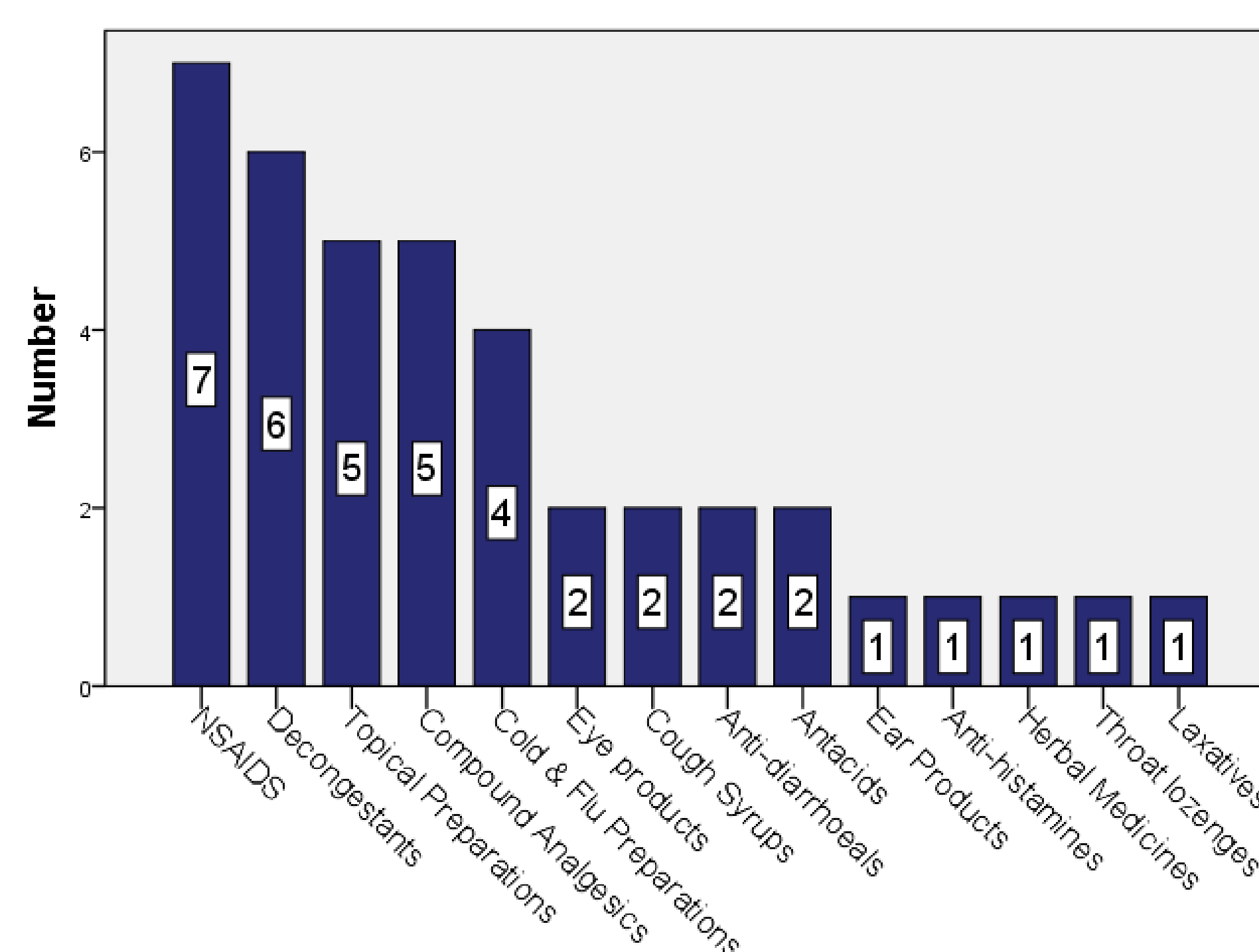


Figure 2: Drug classes involved in DRPs (n=40)

CONCLUSION

The results from this study highlight the importance of the presence of a pharmacist when dispensing OTC medications, since a DRP was detected in nearly one of five encounters. Self-medication should follow the facilitated model, with the contribution of the community pharmacist to guide and advise patients on self-medication products.