

EV0016

ePoster Viewing

Antimicrobials: antibiotic usage

Internet survey on experience of and attitude toward online shopping for antimicrobials in Japan

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Objectives:

Systemic antimicrobials are prescription drugs in Japan. Although over-the-counter antimicrobials are strictly prohibited by Japanese law, they can be bought online without a prescription. The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) issues a warning to such websites to refrain from selling prescription drugs illegally and even shuts down offending websites. Despite the ministry's efforts, new websites appear that invite people to buy antimicrobials without a prescription. The aim of our study was to elucidate people's experience of and attitude toward purchasing antimicrobials online without a prescription.

Methods:

In January 2013, we conducted an Internet survey among individuals who shopped online within the past year. Individuals who purchased antimicrobials during the past year (purchasing group) and those who did not (non-purchasing group) were selected as responders. The purchasing group was asked to name the antimicrobials they bought and the reason for making purchases online. Those in the non-purchasing group who were aware that they could purchase antimicrobials online were asked about their attitude toward purchasing antimicrobials online and their willingness to do so.

Results:

Among 25,329 individuals who shopped online in the past year, 592 persons (2.3%) answered that they had purchased antimicrobials online without a prescription. Additional Internet surveys were conducted for 103 individuals in the purchasing group and 250 individuals in the non-purchasing group. In the purchasing group, 36 individuals (35%) correctly named the brand of the antimicrobials purchased. Other individuals incorrectly identified various brands of cold medicine, acetaminophen, and NSAIDs as antimicrobials. The most frequently purchased antimicrobials were quinolones and penicillins, followed by antivirals. Reasons for purchasing antimicrobials were to treat or prevent respiratory, skin, and abdominal symptoms, and the main reason for making purchases online was the convenience of online shopping without having to visit a hospital or clinic. Of the 36 individuals in the purchasing group who correctly named an antimicrobial, 32 (88.9%) wanted to purchase antimicrobials online again. In the non-purchasing group, 92 individuals (36.8%) answered that they wanted to buy antimicrobials online if given the chance.

Conclusions:

This study shows that some people in Japan purchase antimicrobials online, mainly for the convenience of shopping online. More than half of the individuals who purchased antimicrobials online could not correctly identify them by name. This indicates that some people purchase medicines online with insufficient knowledge. Although only a small proportion of the survey population had purchased antimicrobials online, more than one-third of individuals who had not purchased antimicrobials online indicated willingness to do so. These results suggest the importance of public campaigns on the role of antimicrobials.