

ABSTRACT

It is expected that patients receive medications appropriate to their clinical needs, in doses that meet individual requirements, for an adequate period of time, and at the lowest cost to them and their community. However, evidence shows self-medication, commonly practiced by caregivers of children under 5 years, leads to complications such as habituation, organ failure, congenital defects, allergic reactions, antimicrobial resistance and birth defects. Today, limited studies have investigated the knowledge, practices and factors that promote self-medication the caregivers. A descriptive cross-sectional study was undertaken among 201 caregivers and 10 health care providers to determine the knowledge and practices of self-medication on children under 5 years at Kabondo Kasipul Sub-county Hospital. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. Semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from caregivers while key informant interviews were also used to collect data from the health care providers. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics to reveal the factors related to self-medication by caregivers. Qualitative data was summarized and themes generated, then triangulated with quantitative data. Findings were presented as percentages and proportions, and illustrated using charts and tables. This study reports high level of self-medication of 98%, with 75% of the respondents being unaware of the dangers of self-medication. The key trigger of self-medication is the manifestation of symptoms, and the self-medicated drugs were mainly obtained from the local chemist, most used being pain-killers and antibiotics. Furthermore, this study also reports that while 23.1% of the respondents obtained services at the health facility, up to 62.1% of the respondents had to wait for more than 2 hours to be served, and there was a high chance of missing prescribed drugs at the health facility. In conclusion, self-medication was prevalent and most of the respondents were ignorant of its side effects and dosage. The main factors that promote self-medication in the study community are long waiting hours to be served, and unavailability of drugs and sought services at the health facility. This study recommends the public should be enlightened on self-medication and its side effects, and drugs should be made available at the health facility by the government. There should further be an assessment of the health-seeking behaviour of the community.