

Introduction: Self-medication is a practice that is being widely used in Uganda and other developing countries. There are proven associated consequences that result in using medicine for a long time to manage self illnesses among women of reproductive age.

Objective: The objective of this study was to assess factors influencing self-medication among women of reproductive age in Karenga sub-county, Kaabong district in order to propose possible measures.

Method: The descriptive cross-sectional study involved two hundred eighty (280) women of reproductive age between 18 and above 49 years drawn from Karenga sub-county was assessed. Qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection were used. Qualitative method included; key informant interviews were conducted, structured questionnaire was used for qualitative data. Quantitative data was entered in Microsoft excel and then exported to SPSS version 16 for analysis to address the objectives and questions in this study.

Results: The prevalence of self-medication among women of reproductive age was 60.71%. The majority (41.79%) of the respondents aged 25-34, 32.14% strongly agreed on self-medication, 60.71% had no knowledge on complications of self-medication, and 44.64% have never gone to school. Alcohol brewing was (53.6%) was the major source of income, majority 39.29% of the respondents had average monthly income of less than Shs. 10,000, 57.14% were self-employed, majority 20% of respondents were single. 60.71% of respondents have not been sensitized, 42.86% lived 1-5km from the health facility, majority 73.21% of respondents walk on foot, 73.21% of respondents accepted that health care workers are readily available, majority 66.07% of participants said they cannot access drugs and 66.07% of respondents do not adhere to regulation when self-medicating. The significant factors associated with self-medication in the study were respondent's age (P-value 0.000), attitude towards self-medication (P-value 0.000), knowledge of complications (P-value 0.000), level of education (P-value 0.000), alcohol brewing (P-value 0.000), level of income (P-value 0.006), marital status (P-value 0.000), sensitization (P-value 0.000), distance (P-value 0.000), means of transport (P-value 0.003), access to drugs (P-value 0.001) and adherence to drugs regulations (P-value 0.001).

Conclusion: This study shows that self-medication is common among women of reproductive age in Karenga sub-county. The findings further revealed that there exists a number of individual, socio-economic and health system factors that influence the practice of self-medication among women of reproductive age in Karenga sub-county in Kaabong district.

Recommendations: Health sensitization and awareness campaigns against the use of drugs without physician's prescription should be emphasized by VHTs and religious leaders. The local government also has a role to play in the drive to curb down this undesirable practice of self-medication they can do it by; registering all drug shops and clinics in the area. The ministry of health should put policies to regulate indiscriminate sell of drugs.