

A study of Public Knowledge and Pharmacists Perceptions of Their Roles in Prevention of COVID-19

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SUMMARY. The objective was to assess the public knowledge and attitudes about COVID-19 and the role of pharmacists in the prevention of COVID-19. This was a cross-sectional, web-based study conducted between 1 February to 30 March, 2020. Two instruments were used; 1) a 16-items validated questionnaire for the public ; 2) an open-ended interview questions for pharmacists. A descriptive as well as inferential statistics were used to analyze the questionnaire data and a qualitative analysis was used to analyse the open-ended interview questions. A total of 73 general public residing in 7 countries (Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Iraq, UK, Egypt, Eritrea and Germany) participated in the study. The study participants showed moderate knowledge about COVID-19 (18.9 ± 2.2). There were no differences in the level of knowledge between the general public and those with medical background ($p > 0.05$). There was an association between female sex and a better attitudes about COVID19 as shown by the association of female sex with washing their hands ($p = 0.049$, Pearson coefficient = 4.9), and avoidance of travel during the COVID-19 pandemic ($p = 0.045$, Pearson coefficient=4.8). On the other hand, 39 pharmacists from different countries participated in the study. The majority of the pharmacists were from Saudi Arabia (30%), India (15.3%) and Sudan (10.3%). Pharmacists believed that they have important roles in educating the public about clinical features of COVID-19 and its transmission. Pharmacists also indicated that they can provide support by reporting new cases and supplying pharmaceutical products while counseling patients about their use. The general public had a moderate knowledge about COVID-19. Pharmacists were aware about their role concerning public education and support to prevent COVID-19.

RESUMEN. El objetivo fue evaluar el conocimiento y las actitudes del público sobre el COVID-19 y el papel de los farmacéuticos en la prevención del COVID-19. Este fue un estudio transversal, basado en la web, realizado entre el 1 de febrero y el 30 de marzo de 2020. Se utilizaron dos instrumentos; 1) un cuestionario validado de 16 ítems para el público; 2) una entrevista de preguntas abiertas para farmacéuticos. Se utilizó estadística descriptiva e inferencial para analizar los datos del cuestionario y se utilizó un análisis cualitativo para analizar las preguntas de la entrevista abierta. Participaron en el estudio un total de 73 personas que residen en 7 países (Arabia Saudita, Sudán, Irak, Reino Unido, Egipto, Eritrea y Alemania). Los participantes del estudio mostraron un conocimiento moderado sobre COVID-19 ($18,9 \pm 2,2$). No hubo diferencias en el nivel de conocimiento entre el público en general y aquellos con antecedentes médicos ($p > 0,05$). Hubo una asociación entre el sexo femenino y mejores actitudes sobre COVID19 como lo muestra la asociación del sexo femenino con lavarse las manos ($p = 0,049$, coeficiente de Pearson = 4,9) y la evitación de viajar durante la pandemia de COVID-19 ($p = 0,045$, Coeficiente de Pearson = 4,8). Por otra parte, participaron en el estudio 39 farmacéuticos de diferentes países. La mayoría de los farmacéuticos eran de Arabia Saudita (30%), India (15,3%) y Sudán (10,3%). Los farmacéuticos creen que tienen un papel importante en la educación del público sobre las características clínicas de COVID-19 y su transmisión. Los farmacéuticos también indicaron que pueden brindar apoyo notificando nuevos casos y suministrando productos farmacéuticos al mismo tiempo que animan a los pacientes sobre su uso. El público en general tenía un conocimiento moderado sobre COVID-19. Los farmacéuticos estaban conscientes de su papel en la educación pública y el apoyo para prevenir el COVID-19.

KEY WORDS: COVID-19, pharmacists, prevention, public pandemic infection

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