Reviewer's report

Title: Self-medication and non-doctor prescription practices in Pokhara valley, western Nepal: a questionnaire based study PR Shankar, P Partha, N Shenoy

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Reviewer: Andrew Herxheimer

Level of interest: A paper of limited interest

Advice on publication: Reject

I consider that points 1 to 6 require compulsory revisions; point 7 is discretionary.

1. It is certainly of interest to find out how people self-medicate and use medicines from sources other than doctors, but this survey did not have very clear objectives. No hypotheses are stated. What were the most important questions the authors wanted to answer with their study, and with what purpose?

2. The questionnaire used is not shown. Presumably it was administered orally in Nepalese, but perhaps not. This should be stated. An English translation should be part of the paper.

3. Was the questionnaire piloted, i.e. tried out on a preliminary sample, to ensure that it worked as intended? What training did the students have in using it?

4. Many people cannot reliably recall their medicine use for the previous 6 months, and even those that apparently do often have difficulty in naming them. This introduces potentially large errors and biases. What was done to estimate the extent of these problems, and to minimise them?

5. How was the sample of people chosen? Where were they interviewed? Was it a haphazard convenience sample? If so, the statistical tests on differences in proportions are unjustified and meaningless.

6. The descriptive tables cannot be related to one another. Eg were all or most of the people living far from a roadhead living in a rural area? Were men and women equally distributed among rural and urban people, and among the different age groups?

7. The difference between self-medication without advice from a trained person (eg a CHA or a drug seller), and medication advised by a non-doctor seems important and I think it is unhelpful to lump them together as the authors have done.
Competing interests:

None declared.