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ABSTRACT

Assessing the Knowledge and Risk Awareness about over-the-counter (OTC) Supplements use for Children Aged 2-10 Years in Bethlehem City: Cross Sectional Study

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Background: The increasing global demand for over-the-counter (OTC) supplements for children without real medical needs or prescriptions is a topic of debate, raising questions about their necessity and the extent to which they are used. Some studies support their use, while others are against it. However, there is a lack of similar studies regarding their use in Palestine.

Objective: To determine the knowledge and risk awareness regarding over-the-counter (OTC) supplements and their potential health consequences in children residing in Bethlehem City.

Methods: An online questionnaire was developed using Google Forms and distributed on various Facebook pages from November 26th to December 23th, collecting a total of 60 samples were excluded 'I am not from Bethlehem City, Any medical problems, and children who did not take any supplements'.

Results: The results were analyzed manually, the study results revealed that 70.8% of mothers did not use supplements, while the remaining 29.2% utilized supplements; it is observed that the rate of supplement use in Bethlehem City is low.



The results showed that 87% of the children were provided supplements without physician consultation. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that mothers' knowledge about the risks of using dietary supplements is insufficient.

Furthermore, the study results indicated that 40% of parents in our sample use over-the-counter (OTC) supplements "to promote their children's health" And 20% felt better, this is related to their limited knowledge regarding the nutritional benefits of using supplements for their children, followed to 20% "increase academic achievement", followed to 15% to "increase appetite", followed to 10% Similarly "increase immunity, improve length", and finally for reasons where other reasons whose percentage is not specified because they are few < 5% such as "improving the quality of hair and skin".

The results showed that most of the OTC supplements used, especially multi-vitamins & minerals Gummies, because it is considered one of the most popular and endearing supplements used among children and have many advertisements.

The results showed that the Duration of use of the OTC supplement depends on the use being for an experiment, as it takes two months to complete a full package; they also showed that until the treatment is complete for the prescribed supplements.

Notably, the study found that 100% of mothers did not report any observed side effects, this can be explained by the parents' lack of awareness of the potential side effects of these supplements and the small sample size of this study that is considered insufficient to showcase with side effects due to supplements use.

Conclusions: I conducted a cross-sectional study to assess the awareness of (OTC) supplements among children in Bethlehem City and the results showed: that 87% of children used over-the-counter (OTC) supplements, This indicates a lack of awareness among parents of the potential risks, and the study results show that 45% of parents of our sample use (OTC) supplements 'to promote their children health', This reflects that the parents do not know the true benefit of supplements.



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