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Use of analgesics for headache and self-medication: analysis of habits and risk perception in the general population

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Introduction
Self-medication is a common practice in daily life and is often used as the first alternative to relieve headaches. However, easy access to analgesics and anti-inflammatory drugs without professional healthcare guidance allows for improper use, which may mask more serious conditions and worsen symptoms over time. Therefore, understanding how the population uses these medications and what people actually know about the associated risks is essential for developing strategies for rational drug use.

Objective
To evaluate the profile of self-medication and analgesic use in the general population, as well as to identify participants' level of knowledge regarding the risks associated with the frequent use of these medications.

Methods
This was a cross-sectional, descriptive study conducted through an online questionnaire administered to the general population. Information was collected regarding sociodemographic profile, headache frequency, use of pain medications, self-medication practices, frequency of consumption, and participants' perception of the risks related to the frequent use of analgesics.

Results
Thirty individuals participated in the study, of whom 56.7% reported headache episodes and 93.3% reported using medications for symptom relief. Self-medication was observed in 63.3% of participants, with simple analgesics being the most commonly used. In addition, 86.7% were unaware of possible consequences related to the frequent use of these medications, while 20% reported increased frequency of consumption due to recurrent pain.

Conclusion
The results show that self-medication is highly prevalent in participants' routines and is associated with a lack of information regarding the risks of continuous analgesic use. Therefore, the need for educational strategies aimed at promoting the rational use of medications is reinforced, especially in the management of frequent symptoms such as headache.

Keywords:
Headache
Self-medication
Rational use of medications

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