ANTIBIOTIC SELF-MEDICATION FOR TREATMENT OF REPRODUCTIVE TRACT INFECTIONS (RTIs) AMONG FEMALE GARMENT FACTORY WORKERS IN LAO PDR

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research studies patterns of antibiotic self-medication for treatment of reproductive tract infections (RTIs) among female garment factory workers (FGFWs) in LAO PDR. This is case study research that explores the patterns of antibiotic RTIs treatment among FGFWs and tries to understand the meaning of antibiotic, and RTIs from FGFWs. In-depth interviews were conducted with 6 FGFWs whose age ranged from 16-36 years, and key informants. The technique for finding informants used screening sampling technique and snowball sampling technique. The data were collected from July to October, 2006, by using as interview guideline.

Results showed that the pattern of self-medication began with sharing experiences of RTI symptoms with friends and most individuals mainly bought medicine at drug stores. However, one case that different from the other because she treated her symptom by visiting a health care provider at the public hospital. FGFWs use antibiotic self-medication because of many factors influences them: firstly, antibiotic drugs are seem as medicine for a large group of illnesses. Secondly, it is easy to buy medicine from drug a store. Thirdly, although RTI symptoms were not serious, the causes of RTIs were perceived as related to being a bad girl so individuals felt shy about having gynecological examination. Lastly, they felt stigmatization and discrimination from health care providers.

This study recommends that drug seller should be trained in RTI syndromic approach. The findings pointed out that the majority of FGFWs prefer buying medicine at a drug store. Moreover, local health authority staff should change their attitudes toward their clients particularly clients with RTIs. This is because FGFWs are treated by doctors as an object and not as a human being with equal rights. Also health staff should produce IEC material regarding RTI and consequences of wrong use of antibiotics for FGFWs. Donner agencies who work with factories should select a peer health educator in the factory. The peer health educator should be trained in health.

KEY WORDS: ANTIBIOTIC / SELF-MEDICATION / REPRODUCTIVE TRACT INFECTIONS / FEMALE GARMENT FACTORY WORKERS

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