



# One fourth of acutely admitted patients use over-the-counter drugs 24 hours prior to hospitalization

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## INTRODUCTION

Use of over-the-counter (OTC) drugs is increasing and is poorly registered, which can lead to complications. The most commonly used OTC drugs are analgesics, and their usage is highest among elderly patients. Our study investigates the use of OTC drugs 24 hours prior to hospitalisation and the effects of this intake.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Junior physicians on call interviewed patients admitted to the medical admission unit at South-West Jutland Hospital in Esbjerg using a modified chart template. Adult patients aged 15 and older admitted during a two-week period in August 2012 were included. Patients were asked about consumed OTC drugs, dosage, indication and effect.

## RESULTS

From a total of 349 admissions, 188 usable chart templates were registered (54%), and information on OTC usage was registered on 165 of these (88%). The patients were elderly (median: 70 years) and 43 reported use of OTC drugs (26%). A total of 22 different OTC drugs had been consumed with analgesics being the most widely used OTC drugs (74%). The majority had taken the drugs on a relevant indication (88%), most commonly pain. Half of the patients had taken the drugs in a relevant dosage (51%). In all, 60% felt an effect of the intake and the majority felt an effect on pain symptoms.

## CONCLUSION

One in four patients used OTC drugs 24 hours prior to hospitalisation and primarily analgesics were used. Most patients used OTC drugs relevantly and half with a positive effect. The intake is poorly registered, and there is a need for an increased focus on the rising intake of OTC drugs to avoid potential side-effects and medicine interactions.

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