

INFORMAL SALE OF ANTIBIOTICS IN GUATEMALAN CONVENIENCE STORES BEFORE AND AFTER IMPLEMENTATION OF FEDERAL ANTIBIOTIC DISPENSING LEGISLATION

RESUMEN

Background

Convenience stores in Guatemala provide essential consumer goods in communities, but many dispense antibiotics illegally. Federal legislation, passed in August of 2019, requires prescriptions for antibiotic purchase at pharmacies but it is unclear if this legislation is enforced or if it has any impact on unlawful sales of antibiotics.

Methods

To determine if antibiotic availability changed in convenience stores, we carried out a repeated measures study collecting antibiotic availability data before and after implementation of the dispensing regulation.

Results

There was no statistical difference in the proportion of convenience stores that sold antibiotics before and after antibiotic regulations [66.6% (295/443) and 66.7% (323/484), respectively, $P > 0.96$], nor in the number of stores selling amoxicillin [55.5% (246/443) and 52.3% (253/484), respectively, $P > 0.96$], but fewer stores (20%) sold tetracycline capsules after regulation was passed ($P < 0.05$). For stores visited both before and after passage of legislation ($n = 157$), 15% stopped selling antibiotics while 25% started selling antibiotics. Antibiotics from convenience stores were reportedly sold for use in people and animals.

Conclusions

Antibiotics remain widely available in convenience stores consistent with no significant change in the informal sector after implementation of prescription requirements for pharmacies. Importantly, effects from regulatory change could have been masked by potential changes in antibiotic use during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic.

Palabras clave:

Antibiotics, Prescription, Over-the-counter availability, Convenience stores

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