

Assessment of use and Awareness of Diclofenac in Syria



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Abstract: Diclofenac, known as diclone in Syria, is the most widely used drug in multiple medical conditions. This research was conducted to assess the use and awareness of diclofenac in Syria through a survey. 601 responses were included in this research. Most participants were female (67.7%), between the ages of 18 and 30 years (82.9%), and did not have a chronic disease (86.3%). More than half of the participants were university students (53.4%). A high proportion of the participants had a university education level (87.7%). The most commonly used form for diclofenac was tablets participants(70.9%). 43.8% chose 50mg as the dose of diclofenac. Most participants improved after using diclofenac (73.7%). Participants were satisfied after diclofenac treatment (66.56%). Most had no side effects after treatment with diclofenac (79.5%). 81.3% of the participants who experienced side effects suffered from stomach pain. Fortunately, 84.4% of the participants did not use the injection combining diclofenac with cortisone and an antibiotic. 56.38% used this combination to treat respiratory infections. A minority of the participants experienced allergic reactions after taking this medication (4%). More than two-thirds of the participants will continue to use diclofenac for pain management in the future (65.9%).77.9% of the participants used diclofenac without a prescription. Most participants used this medicine after a meal (82%). 36.6% of the participants recorded half an hour as the onset of diclofenac. The participants reported an action duration of 6 hours (24.5%) and 8 hours (31%). This study confirmed the high use of diclofenac among the Syrians. A good level of awareness was observed among the surveyed participants.

Keywords: Diclofenac, Syria, usage, practice, survey.

I. INTRODUCTION

Diclofenac non-steroidal, non-selective anti-inflammatory drug derived from acetic acid [1]. Diclofenac was discovered in 1965 by a Swiss pharmaceutical company called Ciba-Geigy. Novartis first marketed it as Voltaren in 1973 for its anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties. Today this medication is available in

Manuscript received on 17 August 2024 | Revised Manuscript received on 27 August 2024 | Manuscript Accepted on 15 October 2024 | Manuscript published on 30 October 2024. *Correspondence Author(s)

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more than 150 countries [2]. Diclofenac is often used to relieve pain and inflammation by inhibiting prostaglandin production. It treats and manages various medical conditions such as arthritis, menstrual pain, toothache, and many more [1]-[20]. Diclofenac can be taken orally as a tablet or applied topically as a gel or by injection [21-40]. It is important to follow the prescribed dosage and specific duration of treatment to avoid possible potential side effects including stomach ulcers, kidney problems, and heart diseases [41]-[50]. Diclofenac is generally well tolerated, but individuals with a history of ulcers, heart disease, or kidney problems should use it with caution. It should not be used in late pregnancy due to potential harm to the fetus. Generally, diclofenac is a common and effective drug for managing pain and inflammation [51]-[53]. However, it must be used under the supervision of doctors to ensure safety and good results. This research was carried out to explore practices and knowledge of diclofenac among Syrians.

II. METHODS

A questionnaire was distributed on social media from March to April 2024 to evaluate the Syrians' usage and awareness of the diclofenac. The survey included questions to collect the demographic characteristics of participants and to assess the participants' use and knowledge of diclofenac.

III. RESULTS

A. Demographic Data of Participants

responses were collected. The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table I. 82.9% (498) of the surveyed participants were between 18 and 30 years old. 32.3% (194) of the participants were male and 67.7% (405) were female.

32.6% (196) of the participants lived in urban areas, and 67.4% (405) lived in villages. The questionnaire covers a wide range of social situations at different levels of education. The majority of participants have a university education at 87.7%, followed by a master's degree and a doctorate at 8.5%, lower secondary education level at 2.5%, and finally preparatory and elementary education level at 1% and 0.3% respectively. The questionnaire included two categories; First category: participants were university students (53.4%). Second category: participants were not university students (46.6%). The questionnaire covered several different areas of work or study. The work or the study of most of the participants was related to pharmacy or medicine (83.2%).



The work or study of the rest of the participants was distributed between engineering (6.3%), science (0.8%), or other (7%). Most participants have no chronic disease (86.3%). At the same time, 9.3% of the participants had peptic ulcers, 3.3% had, and 2.7% had heart disease.

Table- I: Demographic Characteristics of Participants in the Survey

Demographic Characteristics		Total Number of Participants (601)	Percentage
1. Age	< 18 years	3	0.5%
	18-30 years	498	82.9%
	31-45 years	64	10.6%
	46-60 years	27	4.5%
	>60 years old	9	1.5%
2. Sex	Male	194	32.3%
	Female	407	67.7%
3. life area	Urbane areas	405	67.4%
	Village	196	32.6%
4. Are you a	Yes	319	53.4%
university student?	non	278	46.6%
	Elementary	2	0.3%
4.	Preparatory	6	1%
Educational	Secondary	15	2.5%
level	University	527	87.7%
	Master-doctorate	51	8.5%
	Medicine/Pharmacy	500	83.2%
5. Do your	Engineering	38	6.3%
study or work relate	Science	5	0.8%
to?	Other	42	7%
	I do not work	16	2.7%
	Gastric ulcer	56	9.3%
6. Do you have any following diseases?	Asthma	20	%3.3
	Hypertension-heart diseases	16	2.7%
	I have not	517	86.3%
7. Have you ever taken Diclofenac before?	Yes	553	88.7%
	No	68	11.3%

B. Level of Participant Usage, Awareness, and Practices

Table II shows the participant's responses regarding the use and knowledge of diclofenac. The most common dosage form of diclofenac was tablets (70.9%), followed by suppositories and creams with 41% and 21.4% respectively. Regarding the conditions of using diclofenac, the highest percentage was related to the treatment of fever and inflammation at 38.1%, followed by toothache at 35.8%, joint, and bone pain at 32.9%, headache at 26.1%, and finally for other medical conditions at 22%. For the dose of diclofenac for an adult, 22.8% of the participants do not know the appropriate dose. 43.8% chose 50mg as the dose, while 20.8% and 18.5% chose 75mg and 100mg respectively. Finally, 10% chose 25mg. When participants were asked how

often they took diclofenac, half (55.2%) rarely took the drug. One-third of participants took this medicine as needed (37.8%). A few took this medicine daily (4%) or several times a week (3%). Majority of the participants felt significant improvement after using diclofenac (73.7%). While 14.3% felt a slight improvement and 0.7% did not notice any improvement.

The degree of satisfaction after the treatment with diclofenac was assessed among the participants in the questionnaire from No. 1 to No. 5, where number 1 indicates complete dissatisfaction and number 5 indicates complete satisfaction. Participants were satisfied (66.56% choosing 4 and 5). The highest percentage of participants did not experience any side effects of diclofenac (79.5%), and only 20.5% experienced side effects. Participants answering the previous question with yes were asked about the types of side effects. The highest percentage of them suffered from stomach pain 91.87%, and 8.13% suffered from other symptoms such as constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, and shortness of breath. In Syria, many patients, even without medical advice, take in cases of common colds an injection containing a combination of diclone, cortisone, and an antibiotic. Fortunately, participants did not use this combination of medications (84.4%) while few participants had previously taken it (15.6%). The percentages of conditions for using this combination were 56.38% for respiratory infections, 21.2% for arthritis, 19.15% for enteritis, and finally 3.19% for skin allergies. Regarding the question of allergic reactions experienced by the participants after taking diclofenac, not all participants answered this question (only 376 responses). Few of the participants had allergic reactions (4%) The percentage was similar among participants who felt better after long-term use (52.7%) and those who did not (47.3%). Most participants will continue to use diclone to treat pain in the future (65.9%).

Table III demonstrates the assessment of the level of knowledge among participants. The survey showed that 77.9% of participants used diclofenac without a prescription, while 29.1% used it with a prescription. Three periods were determined to take diclofenac: after meals, before meals, or at any time. Most participants took this medicine after meals (82%), followed by the participants who took the medicine at any time (15.3%), and finally the participants who took the medicine before food (2.7%). The responses to the average onset of action varied among the participants. 36.6% of the participants recorded a half-hour time. 20.4% of the participants recorded a quarter of an hour. 16.3% of the participants recorded a third of an hour time 11.4% of the participants recorded different times ranging from one hour to 8 hours, and there is a group that did not answer this question and their percentage was 15.3%. For the duration of diclofenac action, answers ranged between 4 hours and 12 hours. The highest percentages of the participants reported an action duration of 6 hours (24.5%) and 8 hours (31%).





Table II: Assessing the use and Awareness Among Participants of Diclofenac (Participants Can Select More than Responses for Some Questions)

	_	Total number	-
Questions	Options	of Participants (601)	Percentage
	Tablets	400	70.9%
8. What dosage	Ointments and creams	121	21.42%
form did you use?	Suppositories	125	22.2%
use:	Parenteral	231	41%
	dosage forms Headache	157	26.1%
	Joint and bone	198	32.9%
What are the conditions for	pain Toothache	215	35.8%
diclofenac use?	inflammation	229	38.1%
	and fever Other	132	22%
	25 mg	60	10%
What is the dose of this	50 mg	263	43.8%
medication	75 mg	125	20.8%
used for an	100 mg	111	18.5%
adult?	I do not know Other	137 31	22.8% 5.2%
	Daily	18	3.1%
10. How many	Several times		
times have you taken	a week	23	4%
taken diclofenac?	appropriately	220	37.8%
diciorchae:	Rarely	321	55.2%
	Yes, a big improvement	465	73.70%
 Did you feel better after 	Yes, a slight	83	14.30%
taking this	improvement No, I didn't	0.5	11.5070
medication?	notice any	5	0.70%
	improvement	3	0.7070
12. How do you	1	19	3.16%
evaluate your	2	17	2.83%
improvement	3	117	19.47%
after taking	4	251	41.76%
diclofenac?	5	149	24.79%
13. Did you experience side	yes	123	20.5%
effects when taking this medication?	No	478	79.5%
14. Did you	Stomach pain	113	91.87%
suffer from side	Other	10	8.13%
effects? 15. Have you	Yes	94	15.6%
ever taken diclofenac in combination with cortisone and antibiotics?	No	507	84.4%
	Respiratory	53	56.38%
16. What were the conditions	tract infection arthritis	20	21.28%
for taking this	Inflammatory		
combination?	diseases	18	19.15%
15. **	Skin allergies	3	3.19%
17. Have you	Yes	15	4%
had an allergic reaction to diclofenac	No	361	96%
18. Have you	Yes	317	52.7%
noticed improvement after prolonged use of diclofenac?	No	284	47.3%
19. Will you	Yes	396	65.9%
continue using diclofenac to treat pain in the future?	No	205	34.1%

Table III: Assessing the Level of Knowledge Among Participants

Questions	Options	Total number of participants (601)	Percenta ges
How well do you know about diclofenac?	In-depth knowledge	228	37.9%
	Relatively good knowledge	352	58.6%
	I don't know it at all.	21	3.5%
How to get diclone?	With a prescription	175	29.1%
	Without a prescription	468	77.9%
What time	Before meals	16	2.7%
should you	After meals	493	82%
take diclofenac?	In any time	92	15.3%
	Half an hour	220	36.6%
What is the average time	A quarter of an hour	123	20.4%
for diclofenac	Third of an hour	98	16.3%
effects?	Other	68	11.4%
	No response	98	15.3%
	4 hours	40	6.6%
How effective does diclofenac last?	6hours	147	24.5%
	8 hours	186	31%
	12 hours	67	11.2%
	Other	55	9.1%
	No response	106	17.6%

IV. DISCUSSION

Diclofenac, like other analgesic medication, is available as OTC, which assumes its frequent self-medicated use to treat mild pain symptoms. Diclofenac is widely used in Syria. Diclofenac has various side effects, so people should be aware enough to avoid misuse or excessive use of diclofenac. This research assessed the usage and knowledge of diclofenac among the Syrians. The study results showed that most participants had previously used diclofenac (88.7%). This finding reflected the high consumption of diclofenac among the Syrians. A similar percentage (77.9%) of the participants reported using diclofenac without consulting a doctor. These results are in concordance with the results of similar studies conducted for NSAIDS [52] wherein self-medication and high consumption of NSAIDs were found. There was not a single medical condition that prompted participants to use diclofenac. The following medical conditions received similar percentages: fever and inflammation (38.1%), toothache (35.8%), and joint and bone pain (32.9%). Diclofenac is available in the Syrian pharmaceutical market in various pharmaceutical forms: tablets, suppositories, injections, and creams. Tablets were the most used among the participants (70.9%). Fortunately, despite the high consumption of diclofenac, the percentage of the participants who experienced side effects was low (20.5%).

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Assessment of use and Awareness of Diclofenac in Syria

Stomach pain was the principal side effect resulting from treatment with diclofenac (81.3%). Few participants had allergic reactions after taking this medication (4%). Knowing the recommended dose and the delay between doses of medication is of great importance to achieve the goal of treatment. Generally, 50mg is the recommended dose for diclofenac sodium and potassium. 43.8% chose 50mg as the recommended dose of diclofenac. Administration of some medications is better when taken on an empty stomach. Diclofenac, as with other NSAIDs, should be taken with or after meals to avoid some side effects like stomach pain. Fortunately, most participants took this medicine after meals (82%). For respiratory infections, some patients are given an injection combining diclofenac, an antibiotic, and cortisone. Fortunately, most participants did not use this injection. Half of them reported using this combination to treat respiratory infections. Most participants are satisfied after the treatment with diclofenac and will continue to use diclofenac to treat pain in the future. This result indicates a good knowledge regarding diclofenac. Despite this fact, they took diclofenac without consulting a doctor in most medical conditions. Therefore, there is a need to increase the knowledge and awareness about diclofenac and other OTC medications.

V. CONCLUSION

The finding of this study revealed a high usage of diclofenac among Syrians. A good level of knowledge about diclofenac was remarked. However, there is a need to conduct further research to evaluate the usage and knowledge of other OTC medications among the Syrian population.

DECLARATION STATEMENT

After aggregating input from all authors, I must verify the accuracy of the following information as the article's author.

- Conflicts of Interest/ Competing Interests: Based on my understanding, this article has no conflicts of interest.
- Funding Support: This article has not been sponsored or funded by any organization or agency. The independence of this research is a crucial factor in affirming its impartiality, as it has been conducted without any external sway.
- Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate: The data provided in this article is exempt from the requirement for ethical approval or participant consent.
- Data Access Statement and Material Availability: The adequate resources of this article are publicly accessible.
- Authors Contributions: The authorship of this article is contributed equally to all participating individuals.

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Assessment of use and Awareness of Diclofenac in Syria

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