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Treating the Common Cold

By Editorial Staff

When an MD is armed only with a prescription pad, the treatment regime for the common cold is fairly predictable. Consider how 1,439 patients in 2,144 medical encounters were treated for the common cold:

Antibiotics Prescription Only -- 32%

Symptomatic Medication Prescription Only -- 6%

Antibiotics and Symptomatic Medication -- 28%

Never Filled the Prescription -- 35%

While over one-third of the patients never bothered to get the antibiotic prescriptions filled, the 60 percent who did contributed to what the authors describe as a misuse of antibiotics by MDs, which, conservatively, is a \$37.5 million annual expenditure in the U.S.

SOURCE: Mainous AG, Hueston WJ, Clark JR. Antibiotics and upper respiratory infection. *J Fam Pract* 1996; 42:357-361.



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