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COMMUNITY HEALTH SURVEY IN RURAL ANDHRA PRADESH: BRIDGING CLASSROOM LEARNING WITH REAL-WORLD PATIENT CARE

Introduction

As part of its commitment to rural health development, Vikas Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (VIPS), Rajahmundry, conducted a five-day series of medical camps across its five adopted villages from 17–21 November 2025. Alongside providing free health assessments, essential screening, and medication support, the institute conducted a Community Health Survey aimed at generating meaningful insights into the health status, awareness levels, and healthcare-seeking behaviors of rural populations.

The findings from this survey not only provide a valuable snapshot of community health needs but also demonstrate the role of academic institutions in promoting evidence-

based public health interventions. Importantly, the initiative served as a real-world learning platform for Pharm.D and pharmacy students, enabling them to apply classroom knowledge directly to community healthcare challenges.

Methods

The survey was administered to adult participants attending the medical camps in the selected villages. A structured questionnaire—covering demographics, self-reported health status, medication use behavior and adherence, healthcare accessibility and antibiotics—was used to collect data. Participants underwent basic screening for blood pressure and random blood glucose.

Data was collected by trained Pharm.D interns, supervised by faculty members. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was strictly maintained. The survey methodology aligned with ethical research practices and adhered to VIPS' institutional guidelines.

Key Findings

1. Lack of Disease Awareness: Many patients don't understand their condition, its severity, or how to manage it.
2. Poor Medication Adherence: People often stop taking medicines when symptoms improve or don't follow prescribed regimens.
3. Self-Medication: Patients frequently rely on self-medication, home remedies without consulting doctors.
4. Limited Access to Healthcare: Financial constraints, distance, or lack of emergency care hinder proper treatment.
5. Antibiotic Misconceptions: There's widespread unawareness about antibiotic use, resistance, and misuse.
6. Painkiller Misuse: Frequent use of painkillers without medical supervision is common.



7. Inadequate Patient Counseling: Patients often lack clear guidance on medication use, disease management, and follow-ups.
8. Neglecting Follow-ups: Many don't return for check-ups or continue treatment as needed.
9. Misconceptions about Health Issues: Some believe health problems are age-related and don't seek timely medical attention.
10. Communication Gaps: Patients often don't understand medical instructions or can't explain their symptoms clearly.

Student learning: connecting classroom knowledge to real-world healthcare

One of the most impactful aspects of this initiative was the experiential learning opportunity it offered to VIPS students. For many, the medical camps served as their first direct engagement with community health challenges, reinforcing the practical relevance of their academic training.

Students practiced measuring vital signs, providing medication counselling, educating patients on lifestyle changes, identifying risk factors, and documenting findings. They also witnessed firsthand how socioeconomic conditions and cultural beliefs influence health-seeking behavior. This experience strengthened their confidence, communication abilities, and preparedness for careers in public health and clinical pharmacy.

Discussion

This community health survey highlights the potential of structured outreach programs to generate meaningful data for planning targeted public health interventions. The combination of screening, counselling, and data collection created immediate benefits for the community while supporting evidence-based long-term

health strategies.

Such initiatives also enhance student learning by bridging theory and practice, shaping future healthcare professionals who are compassionate, informed, and committed to addressing healthcare gaps in underserved areas.

Conclusion

The community health survey conducted during the VIPS medical camps illustrates how academic institutions can meaningfully contribute to rural public health while enriching student learning. The dual goals of service and education were achieved—benefiting villagers while offering students valuable real-world exposure.

As the data undergoes further analysis, VIPS plans to publish the full results and collaborate with international partners—including the University of Findlay—to expand community health research and outreach.

