

Knowledge and need for information about non-prescription analgesics

A cross-sectional study among pharmacy customers

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/ BACKGROUND

Pain is among the most common causes for seeking drug treatment. There is widespread use of non-prescription analgesics, and previous studies suggest that the level of knowledge about these drugs is low.

/ OBJECTIVE

The aim of the study was to describe the level of knowledge about non-prescription analgesics among pharmacy customers, thereby identifying population groups in high need of information.

/ METHODS

A questionnaire based, cross-sectional study was conducted among pharmacy customers (>18 years) by pharmacy master students in four Norwegian cities (Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø and Skien). A knowledge score (0-23) was calculated based on 23 statements and categorized as low (≤ 8), medium (9-17) or high (> 17) knowledge level. Multiple linear regression analyses were used to investigate the relationship between factors and knowledge of non-prescription analgesics. Factors that will be assessed for associations with analgesics knowledge comprise beliefs/attitudes to non-prescription analgesics and medications in general, health literacy, and health related and socio-demographic factors.

/ RESULTS

The study included 893 pharmacy customers, mean age 50 years, 67% women. The overall mean knowledge score was 13.1 (3.8 SD), i.e. medium knowledge level. 14% had low knowledge, 11% had high knowledge.

Statements with particularly low knowledge included:

“Excessive use of non-prescription painkillers makes them less effective” (5% correct, 78% incorrect)

“Non-prescription painkillers can cause addiction” (16% correct, 62% incorrect)

“Paracetamol (Paracet[®], Pinex[®]) is safe to use during breast-feeding and pregnancy” (28% correct, 16% incorrect).

Factors associated with higher knowledge score on non-prescription analgesics:

- Health
- Education
- Chronic disease
- Non-prescription analgesics use the last four weeks
- Higher education level
- Higher belief score about medicines benefits (BMQ-benefits) and overuse (BMQ-overuse)

Non-significant factors: age, gender, attitudes toward non-prescription analgesics, health literacy, and belief score about medicines harm (BMQ-harm).

/ KNOWLEDGE STATEMENTS

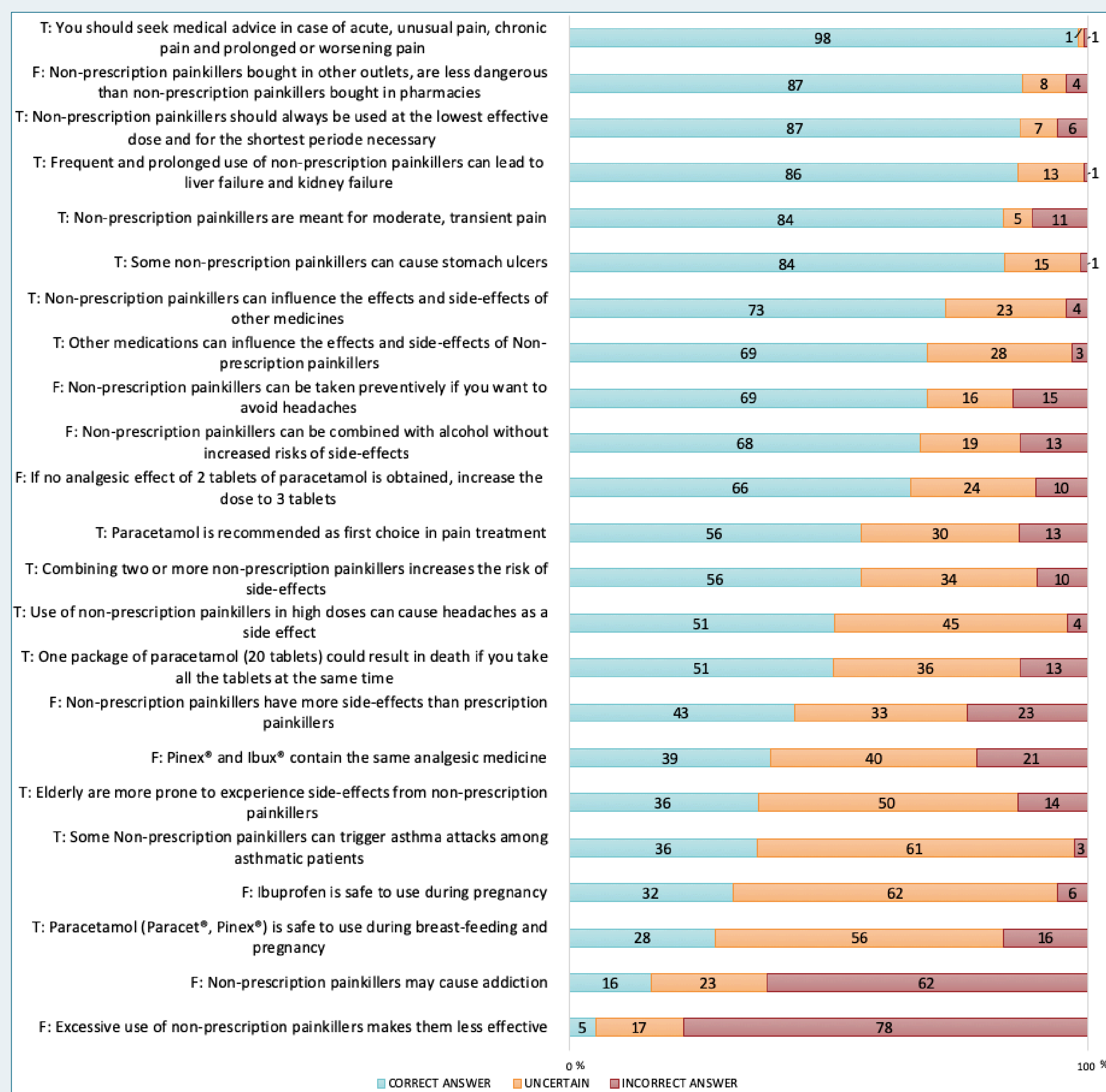


Figure 1. Proportion of participants with correct identification of true and false statements about non-prescription analgesics. T: true statement F: false statement

/ FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH KNOWLEDGE ON NON-PRESCRIPTION ANALGESICS

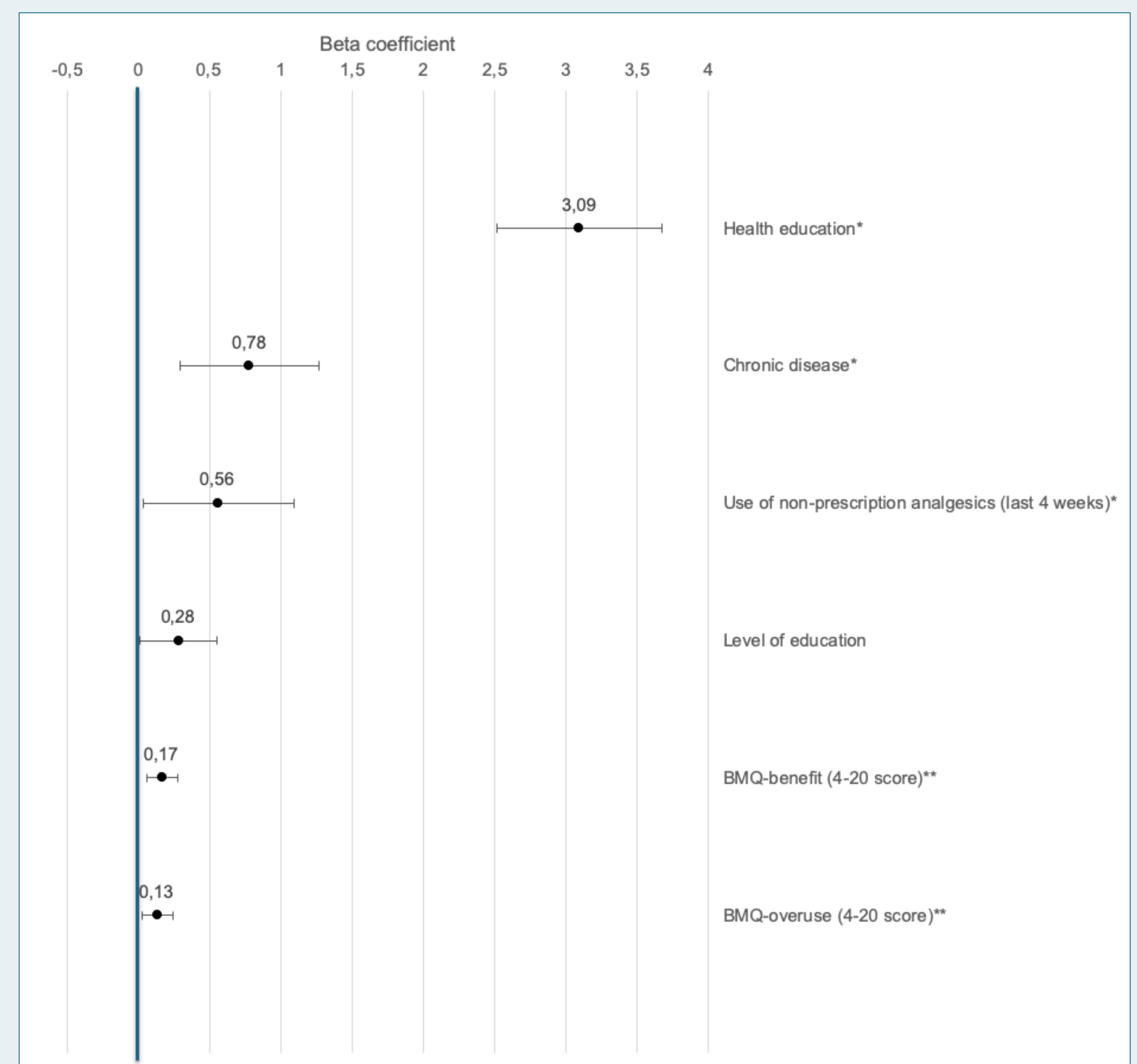


Figure 2. Association between various characteristics and knowledge of non-prescription analgesics (multiple lin. regression).

* Reference category in the analysis is “no”

** Beliefs about medicines (score range). Five-point Likert scale per statement (from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5), 4 statements per BMQ domain.

/ CONCLUSION

The knowledge about non-prescription analgesics among pharmacy customers seems to be mediocre. Analyses shows that groups with lower education have a higher need for information on safe use of RSL. It is relevant to draw up measures to increase the total knowledge score on non-prescription analgesics and knowledge within fields with particularly low knowledge.