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Outpatient consumption of antidepressants in Croatia and trends in the rate of hospitalization for depression (2001-2010)- A challenge for primary care physicians

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Aim: Depression is one of the most common mental disorders in general population. The aim of this study was to determine the effect of antidepressant consumption on the rate of hospitalization for depression and to reinforce the role of family physician in the early recognition and treatment of mild to moderate depressive disorders.

Methodology: Hospitalization data were collected for every hospitalized patient in Zagreb hospitals during 2001-2010 period. Using the WHO Anatomical-Therapeutic-Chemical classification/Defined Daily Doses (ATC/DDD) methodology, the number of DDD was calculated from data collected from all Zagreb pharmacies on the number and size of drug packages.

Results: From 2001 to 2010, the rate of hospitalization for depression has increased from 168,26/100.000 to 337,04/100.000. The mean length of hospital stay was reduced from 35 to 34.5 days. Outpatient utilization of anti-depressants was increased by 90% (11.4 DDD/TID vs. 20.59 DDD/TID). The highest rise was recorded in the consumption of SSRI by 148 %, with an increased proportion of sertraline and fluvoxamine. Outpatient consumption of nonselective inhibitors of monoamine reuptake decreased by 68%. In the subgroup of other antidepressants, a rise was recorded in the consumption of mirtazapine and venlafaxine in particular. The anxiolytic/antidepressant ratio decreased from 6.45 in 2001 to 2.55 in 2010.

Conclusion: Although the overall outpatient utilization of antidepressants increased during the study period, the rate of hospitalization for depression increased as well. The decrease in the utilization of anxiolytics with symptomatic action and the increased utilization of antidepressants with etiologic action points to improved psychopharmaceutical prescribing quality. Utilization of anxiolytics is still too high and irrational due to the high utilization of benzodiazepines. Continuous education of primary care physicians in early detection and treatment of mental disorders is required. Introduction of a questionnaire for early recognition of depression symptoms at the primary healthcare level would be highly useful.

Biography

Marina Polić-Vizintin graduated from the School of Medicine, University of Zagreb in 1982. She defended her PhD thesis in 2015 at the same School of Medicine. She passed her specialist exam in Social Medicine in 1989. She is working at Dr. Andrija Štampar Teaching Institute of Public Health. She did her Post-graduate study in Gerontology and in Public Health. She was a Senior Lecturer at the University of Applied Health Studies in Zagreb. She participated in a number of research projects, took active part in many congresses and seminars in Croatia and abroad. She has published numerous professional and scientific papers in Croatian and international periodicals.

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