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CURRENT PRESCRIBING PATTERNS AND USE OF NON-BENZODIAZEPINE HYPNOTICS IN A RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Medicine, Pharmacotherapy.

Declaration

I, Gauri Jain, declare that this research report is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Science in Medicine, Pharmacotherapy, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at this or any other institution.

_____

Gauri Jain

_____ day of _____, 2008.

Dedication

This research is dedicated to my parents, Prof. PK Jain and Dr P Jain.

Abstract

Non-benzodiazepine drugs such as zopiclone and zolpidem are alternatives to treatment of insomnia, but are recommended only for short-term treatment. The objectives of the study were to evaluate the prescribing patterns and usage of these drugs.

Method: Data was collected from Clicks Rosebank Pharmacy. One hundred (100) patients presenting with prescriptions for either zolpidem or zopiclone were followed over a period of seven months and data was collected regarding: demographic characteristics of patients; drug and dose distribution; ICD10 codes; prescriber characteristics; period of use; and whether use was continuous or "as needed" (uninterrupted or interrupted). All data was collected from the Unisolv computer system. Over a period of one year, total prescriptions received for all drugs were compared to the total number of zopiclone/zolpidem prescriptions received to gauge whether there was any seasonal variation in hypnotic use.

Results: In each age group, excluding 20 years and below, the number of females was greater than males. The mean age of all patients between the ages of 21 and 80 years was 53.1 years. Out of 100 patients, 85 (85%), used either zolpidem 10mg or zopiclone 7.5mg, which are the standard doses. The most common ICD 10 code observed was G47.0, Disorders of initiating and maintaining sleep [insomnias], occurring in 52 (52%) of 100 prescriptions. Of the 100 initial prescriptions, 68 (68%) were prescribed by General Practitioners, while 32 (32%) were prescribed by Specialists. Thirty of the 100 patients (30%) used one of the drugs for the full seven months; twenty two patients (22%) used one of the drugs for a period of one month or less; and the remaining 48 patients (48%) used a hypnotic for a total of two to six months. The number of patients who used a hypnotic in an interrupted manner, with each period of use of one month or less duration, was 34 (34%). The number of patients who used a hypnotic for at least one uninterrupted period of more than 1 month's duration was 66 (66%). Over a period of 12 months, prescriptions for either zolpidem or zopiclone represented 3.17% of total prescriptions. There was no significant seasonal fluctuation in hypnotic use.

Conclusion: The majority of patients used one of the two hypnotics in an uninterrupted manner, and over a long term as well. Despite numerous cautions in the literature, these medications are still being prescribed and used in a manner contrary to existing guidelines.

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