

Therapeutic Combinations in Psychiatric Disorders, a Descriptive-Retrospective Study in Korçë, Albania

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Abstract

Background: Only few studies have reported results on drug prescribing for psychiatric disorders in Albania.

Aim: The aim of this study is to evaluate the therapeutic combinations of the drugs most commonly used to treat psychiatric disorders, as well as to evaluate their safety and tolerability by comparing them to monotherapy.

Methods: This is a retrospective descriptive study that included patients who have received treatment from 2016 to 2021 for a psychiatric disorder at two different health centres in the city of Korçë, Albania. The data collected from the medical databases of patients in three neighbourhoods were analysed. Patients were categorized into groups: by age (age group 0-30

years; 31-60 years; over 60 years), by method of treatment (monotherapy and polytherapy), by the type of therapeutic combination administered, and by visits to specialists.

Results: Out of 83 patients from three different neighbourhoods who received treatment for a psychiatric disorder, 46 of them (55.4 %) were male. The most common diagnosis was psychotic disorder. The most commonly used drugs were antipsychotics, followed by antidepressants, mood stabilizers and anxiolytics. Only 18 (21.7%) of the patients had received only one psychotropic drug as monotherapy, while the majority, 65 (78.3 %) had been treated with two or more psychotropic drugs for longer than 3 months. The most common combinations were:

risperidone with fluvoxamine, olanzapine with fluvoxamine, risperidone with carbamazepine and risperidone with chlordiazepoxide. Patients treated with polytherapy complained significantly more ($p = 0.0085$) about side effects compared to patients receiving monotherapy, respectively, 10.8 % vs 5.6 % of arrhythmia, 9.2% vs 5.6 % of constipation, 13.9 % vs 11.1 of visual disturbances and 16.9% vs 11.1 of sleep disorders. Also, it was found that 25.0 % of patients who were treated with two antipsychotic drugs, received a treatment with an anticholinergic due to the extrapyramidal effects shown. In contrast, among patients treated with monotherapy, this figure resulted 11.1%. Overall, 25 patients (30.1 %) have had a check-up at the cardiologist, 16 (19.3 %) at the ophthalmologist and 8 (9.6 %) at the endocrinologist.

Conclusion: After analysing the data for these patients in retrospect, it is strongly implied that the administration of two or more psychotropic drugs simultaneously to the same patient is a risk factor for increased side effects. It was observed that the treatment with more than one antipsychotic drug is associated with increased chances of appearance of extrapyramidal effects.

Keywords: Psychiatric disorder, psychotropic drugs, polytherapy, monotherapy.