

Psychopharmacologic treatment in bipolar, schizoaffective and schizophrenic patients: a descriptive study

J. Moreno Monmany, S. Castillo Magaña, E. Mur Mila, A. Cencerrado Muñoz, S. Oller Canet (1)
(1) Institut de Neuropsiquiatria i Addicions, CSMA Martí i Julià, Parc de Salut Mar. Barcelona, Spain

Introduction

The psychopharmacological treatment of severe mental disorders is difficult and polypharmacy is common, despite the recommendations of prescription Guides. The aim of the study is to describe antipsychotics, antidepressants, benzodiazepines, lithium and anticonvulsants used on a sample of bipolar, schizoaffective and schizophrenic outpatients.

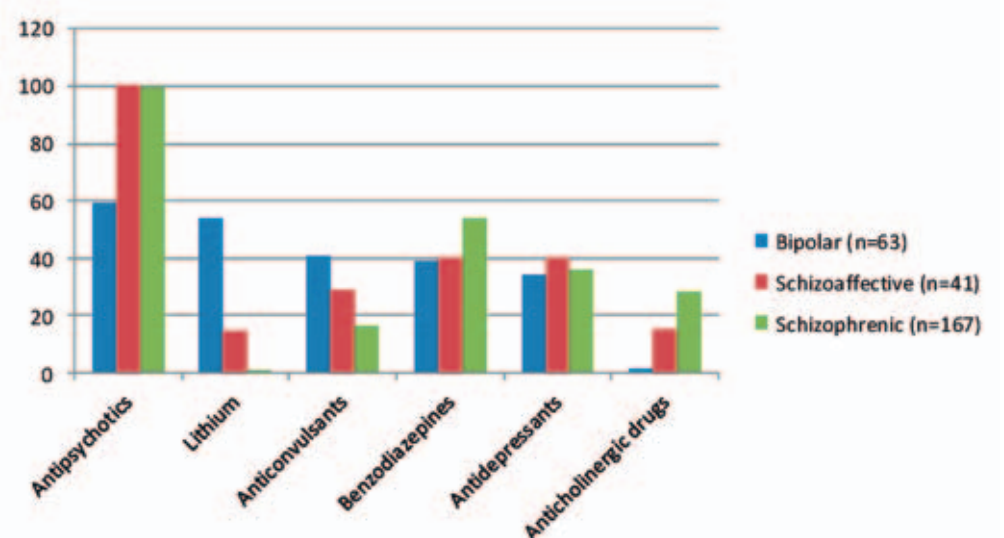
Methods

This is a cross-sectional study. A randomized sampling was performed among the outpatients that met ICD 10 criteria for bipolar, schizoaffective or schizophrenic disorder and that were receiving routine psychiatric treatment in four outpatient clinics in Barcelona (Spain) with reference population of about 400,000 inhabitants, between January 2011 and June 2012. For each patient sociodemographic, clinical (cardiovascular risk factors) and pharmacotherapeutic data were collected through interviews and clinical history. Data were analysed using SPSS.

Results

The sample consisted of 281 subjects (51.6% men, 48.4% women with an average age of 44 years). Most of the patients in the sample have basic education (45.9%) and are unemployed, receiving permanent disability pension (45.4%). In addition, 47.1% of the subjects were living with family members and were not married (60.5%). Cardiovascular risk factors observed were 11.2% with diabetes, 32.5% with dyslipidemia, 12.5% with arterial hypertension and 60% were smokers. Psychopharmacological treatment by diagnosis: Among bipolar patients (N=63), 59% were using antipsychotics, 54% were using lithium, 41% were using anticonvulsants, 38.7% were using benzodiazepines, 34.4% were using antidepressants and 1.6% were using anticholinergic drugs. Among schizoaffective patients (N=41), 100% were using antipsychotics, 40% were using benzodiazepines, 40% were using antidepressants, 28.9% were using anticonvulsants, 15.4% were using anticholinergic drugs and 14.6% were using lithium. Among schizophrenic patients (N=167), 99.4% were using antipsychotics, 54% were using benzodiazepines, 35.8% were using antidepressants, 28.5% were using anticholinergic drugs, 16.3% were using anticonvulsants and 0.6% were using lithium. About type of antidepressant by diagnosis: Among bipolar patients, 15.9% SSRIs, 14.3% dual antidepressants, 4.8% tricyclic antidepressants and 4.8% others. Among schizoaffective patients, 24.4% SSRIs, 12.2% dual antidepressants, 4.9% tricyclic antidepressants and 2.4% others. Among schizophrenic patients, 30.5% SSRIs, 4.2% dual antidepressant, 2.4% tricyclic antidepressants and 4.8% others.

Psychopharmacological treatment by diagnosis



Conclusions

Based on prescription guides [1], [2], antidepressants do not constitute the elective treatment for any of these three disorders. In this study we can observe that a very high percentage of patients (over a third) has been prescribed, and is taking, antidepressants. The percentage is similar among the three diagnostic groups. At the same time, the high percentage of patients taking benzodiazepines is remarkable, since this treatment should only be prescribed in acute phases of the disorder and during a limited period of time, due to the risk that it can cause dependence [3]. The results of this study are similar to the results of previous studies on this subject [3], [4]. Additional research and possibly a reassessment of prescribing guidelines are recommended.

References

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