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An investigation into clozapine prescribing among psychiatrists in Australia

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An investigation into clozapine prescribing among psychiatrists in Australia

Abstract

Abstract of a paper that was presented at the The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists 2014 New Zealand Conference, 15-17 October, Otago Museum, New Zealand.

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An Investigation into Clozapine Prescribing Among Psychiatrists in Australia

Background: Clozapine is an effective antipsychotic for the management of treatment-resistant schizophrenia. There is a lack of knowledge of the clozapine prescribing patterns of psychiatrists in Australia.

Objective: The aims of the study were to identify prescribing patterns for clozapine in Australia; identify at what time point and under what circumstances clozapine treatment is initiated in Australia; assess the views of psychiatrists to clozapine treatment; understand reasons why some psychiatrists are reluctant to prescribe clozapine; and identify treatment strategies for patients with schizophrenia who do not or partially respond to clozapine.

Method: A cross-sectional survey was developed using online survey software, and psychiatrists were invited to participate through a monthly edition of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists e-Psych online newsletter.

Results: Sixty-two psychiatrists completed the survey, with over 40% of respondents between the ages of 35-44 years, and working in one or a combination of the public, private and tertiary settings. From the survey population, 69% of respondents stated they would commence a patient on clozapine treatment after two unsuccessful trials of other antipsychotics. Twenty-three percent of respondents were reluctant to prescribe clozapine to their patients, and 2 in 5 psychiatrists with greater than ten years' experience, reported a reluctance to prescribe. Leading the reasons for reluctance was the concern that individuals may develop metabolic syndrome, and chronic physical health issues that are associated with weight gain.

Conclusions: The survey responses suggest a need for further investigation into the reasons for disparity between clozapine knowledge and understanding, and the reluctance to prescribe.