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The Prescription Pattern in the Treatment of Acute Insomnia among Rural Physicians as per the NICE Guidelines

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ABSTRACT

Insomnia is one of the most disabling disorders afflicting the society, with a staggering emotional and economical impact. Most of the patients consult physicians rather than consulting the psychiatrist at the first point of contact and hence, we have planned to take up this study to know as to how many physicians treat acute insomnia as per the guidelines. To study and compare the prescription pattern among rural physicians in treating acute insomnia as per the National Institute for health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines. Seventy five physicians in the rural areas were given a questionnaire and were given enough time to fill it. Later on, all the questionnaires were collected and analyzed. Physicians in rural areas: 65 physicians prescribed the short acting benzodiazepine group, 9 physicians prescribed the z-class of drugs and 01 physician prescribed anti-histaminic. The NICE guidelines state that for the treatment of acute insomnia, the drug of choice is the Z-class of drugs. In our study, most of the physicians practicing in the rural areas need to have awareness campaigns and medical educational programs regarding the treatment of acute insomnia.

Keywords: Acute insomnia, benzodiazepine.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite essential drug programs being implemented in countries, there are some evidences in irrational use of drugs, high numbers of drugs per prescription and high use of injectable formulations and antibiotics. Inappropriate prescribing has been identified in many health facilities in developing countries. Misuse of antibiotics, overuse of injections, and under-use of life-extending drugs for illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, heart disease and other chronic illnesses together constitute a global epidemic of the irrational use of medicines¹. According to the figures gathered by a survey in a study, 60% of antibiotics in Nigeria were prescribed unnecessarily². The irrational use of drugs due to inappropriate prescription can also lead to adverse drug events which cause illness or death. Surveys have also shown that doctors prescribe drugs when they are not indicated. This descriptive cross-sectional study examined the prescription pattern among rural physicians in the treatment of acute insomnia as per the NICE guidelines³.

NICE provides national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health in collaboration with the National Health Service (NHS)³. Zolpidem, Zopiclone and Zaleplon are a new group of drugs called Non-benzodiazepine hypnotics in the treatment of acute insomnia; they are also called as the Z-class of drugs. They share common features like shorter duration of action, less residual effects, limited negative influences on daytime performance and better preserved psychomotor tasks and memory capacities⁴.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This is a descriptive study conducted among physicians practising in the rural areas of Kolar. A set of questions were prepared and were given to the physicians. Almost 75 questionnaires were distributed. All the questions were multiple choice questions.

RESULTS

The questionnaires were collected back from the physicians and were studied (Table1).

Physicians in rural areas:

Totally 75 questionnaires were collected back out of which only 9 physicians prescribed the z-class of drugs, while 65 of them prescribed the short acting benzodiazepine. The disheartening fact was that 1 physician used antihistamines for treating acute insomnia.

Sleep disorders are one of the major health problems in the developed and also in the developing countries⁵. Increase in the severity of insomnia is associated with increased chronic medical and psychiatric illnesses due to increase in the corporate culture and also due to people's inability to achieve their desired goals/targets.⁶

The first visit that most of the patients make, are to the physicians rather than to the psychiatrist. Hence, physicians should be aware of the current drugs available and also the recent information/guidelines for treating such conditions.

NICE guidelines prefer the Z-class of drugs like zolpidem, zopiclone and zaleplon for the treatment of acute insomnia. The advantages of Z-class of drugs over insomnia are

- No tolerance
- No dependence
- No rebound insomnia
- No next day sedation

CONCLUSION

From the present study, it can be concluded that most of the physicians practicing in rural areas need continuing medical education in appropriate use of insomnic drugs. Hence, Continuing Medical Education programs, workshops/campaigns and small conferences should be arranged to update the disease modalities and treatment so that proper utilization of the resources is made for better outcome. Findings from this study will also sensitize the increased awareness and also many educational programs on rational drug use and guidelines.

Key Message Z class of drugs: Zolpidem, Zopiclone and Zaleplon

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