

Anti-epileptic prescribing patterns in the South African private health sector (2008–2013)

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Background: Little is known about longitudinal prescribing practices for anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs) in South Africa. The prescribing patterns and associated direct medicine costs of AEDs in the private health sector were investigated, using claims data from January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2013.

Methods: The annual prevalence of prescriptions, AEDs and AED generics per patient with epilepsy (ICD-10 code G40) was determined. Cost analyses conducted included the calculation of the total direct cost of AEDs (medical scheme contribution, patient co-payment, and single exit price (SEP)), and the average cost per AED per year.

Results: Prevalence of patients claiming anti-epileptics ranged between 0.87% and 0.91% from 2008 to 2013. AED prescriptions/patient ranged from 11.76 (95% CI, 11.56–11.95) in 2008 to 11.90 (95% CI, 11.71–12.09) in 2013. Patients aged 40–65 years had the highest number of AED prescriptions/year. Valproate was most prescribed, followed by lamotrigine and carbamazepine. Average cost per AED increased from R237.12 (95% CI, 233.58–240.65) in 2008 to R522.32 (95% CI, 515.24–529.41) in 2013, while the average patient co-payments increased from R27.76 (95% CI, 26.63–28.89) to R264.32 (95% CI, 260.61–268.03). Prescribing of generics increased by 12.84%.

Conclusions: Generic prescribing increased over time; however, patient co-payments increased dramatically.

Keywords: anti-epileptic, direct medicine costs, longitudinal, medicine claims database, prescribing patterns, South Africa

More than scales and tape measures needed to address obesity in South Africa

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Obesity is an emerging public health problem worldwide increasing from 857 million in 1980 to 2.1 billion by 2013. A study was done on a sample of 100 obese and overweight patients with a body mass index (BMI) above 25 kg/m². The patients were asked to complete a questionnaire, which included socio-demographic data and perceptions regarding their weight.

The patients were between the ages of 18 and 76 years old with 82% being female patients. The mean BMI for males was 41.7 kg/m² (SD = 7.38112) and females 39.9 kg/m² (SD = 7.90504). The results of this study confirm that 17% of overweight and obese patients saw themselves as having a normal weight and 97% felt that they were not unattractive. Of the sample, 96% affirmed that being obese was a health risk. The commonest reason cited for their obesity is by choice (70%).

Although obese patients knew that obesity is a health risk, they have a positive image of obesity. The dramatic trend towards increasing obesity suggest that healthcare providers need to understand how people from different cultures view obesity. This will help them to promote key messages about the health risks associated with excess weight in a culturally sensitive way.

Keywords: obesity, overweight, perceptions, South Africa