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Abstract - Master Thesis Project, the Pharmacy Programme

Potentially inappropriate medications among dementia drug users

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Background: Drugs with anti-cholinergic properties and long-acting benzodiazepines may induce cognitive dysfunction. The complex picture of dementia may be exacerbated further by use of these drugs which are considered potentially inappropriate in this population.

Objective: To study dementia drug use and occurrence of potentially inappropriate medication among dementia drug users and associations with age, sex, income marital status and co-morbidity.

Method: Individual based data on dispensed prescriptions was collected from the Swedish Prescribed Drug Register and the LISA-database. The study population included those who purchased dementia drugs between January-April and September-December 2006 (n = 22514). Potentially inappropriate drug use was analysed for all participants during January-December 2006. Chi-square test was used to analyse whether use of inappropriate medicines differed by age, sex, income, marital status, co-morbidity and type of dementia drug.

Result: Donepezil was the most common dementia drug, used by 53 % of the study population and the majority of users were individuals with low income (36.7%). Memantine was least common (used by 18.5 %) and the majority of users were individuals with high income (39.5%). Potentially inappropriate drugs were used by 20.7% (anti-cholinergics 15.2% and long-acting benzodiazepines 7.3%). Use of potentially inappropriate drugs was slightly higher among those never married and divorced as well as those with 10 or more dispensed drugs and memantine users (p < .0001).

Conclusions: About one fifth of the Swedish dementia drug users used potentially inappropriate drugs, although they may induce or exacerbate cognitive dysfunction.