

[P-50E] Multicenter comparison of antidepressant use among Southwest Veterans Affairs Medical Centers-VISN 18

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This multicenter retrospective database analysis examines antidepressant use across 6 VA network (VISN) facilities within west Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona during fiscal year 1999. The purpose was to use a prescription database to establish clinical and economic benchmarks, allowing for interfacility comparisons. Identical facility specific computer files of antidepressant and benzodiazepine prescriptions were created. These files were imported into a relational database program for analysis. The database included over 140,000 prescription fills for 26,000 patients. Several differences were seen between facilities. The percentage of outpatients treated with antidepressants ranged from 12.8% to 24.5% (VISN average 21.2%). The percentage of treated patients at a therapeutic dose for depression ranged from 54% to 66.9% (average 61.4%). The average daily cost/treated patient ranged from \$0.58 to \$0.81 (average \$0.71). A strong negative correlation existed between tricyclic antidepressant use and both daily cost/treated patient and percentage at a therapeutic dose ($p < 0.001$). VISN averages for frequency of use by class and daily cost/treated patient were as follows: SSRI 40.9% (\$1.32), TCA 46.6% (\$0.06), MAOI <0.1% (\$1.02) and other 12.5%(\$1.17). Additionally, other parameters evaluated included: demographic characteristics, frequency of use and costs by drug, dosing stratification, switch rates between antidepressants, and use of concurrent therapy. This study established benchmarks for comparison between VA facilities. Meaningful differences between facilities in the use and costs of antidepressant therapy were demonstrated. These warrant further investigation. This study serves as an example of a multicenter comparative database analysis of a class of drugs and establishes benchmarks for comparison of antidepressant use in VA facilities.