

## **Patterns of Antipsychotic Medication Prescribing in Australia**

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### **Background:**

The Australian prevalence rate for schizophrenia is estimated to be 3.1 per 1000 people<sup>1</sup>. In recent years, antipsychotic pharmacological treatment options have increased in Australia, including reimbursed atypical long acting therapies (ALATs). The Australian Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) reimburse a number of these antipsychotic therapies, however there is little published evidence around the patterns of utilization and the patient characteristics for these options. Availability of the Department of Human Services PBS 10% sample data has enabled an Australia wide investigation into trends of antipsychotic usage.

### **Aims & Objectives:**

To describe antipsychotic prescribing patterns in Australia.

### **Method:**

A retrospective cohort analysis was conducted using the PBS 10% sample data, including patients who commenced on antipsychotic therapy for schizophrenia between July-2013 and September-2017. Patients who commenced on an antidepressant prior to an antipsychotic were omitted from the analysis. A descriptive analysis was undertaken to understand rates of antipsychotic use. Antipsychotics were grouped as atypical oral, ALAT, typical oral, typical LAT (TLAT) and clozapine. Variables available for subgroup analysis were state, gender, age and prescriber speciality. Reasons for initiation, disease severity and other clinical data were not available.

### **Results:**

In total, 6,740 unique patients were identified in the sample data, 61% were male and 39% were female. Across all lines of antipsychotic therapy, 62% of patients were dispensed an atypical oral, 19% a TLAT, 9% prescribed typical orals, 7% an ALAT and 3% clozapine. This pattern of use was consistent over the study period. Age based trends were identified including; higher use of ALAT's in patients under the age of 45, and a higher use of TLAT's in patients over the age of 45. Clozapine was mostly prescribed in patients aged 35 to 64. General Practitioners tended to prescribe ALAT's the least, making up 3% of their total patients, compared with 9% psychiatrist who prescribed them to 9% of their patients. No significant differences in prescribing patterns by gender or state.

### **Discussion & Conclusion:**

Even with the introduction of new therapies, it has been demonstrated that there has been little shift in prescribing patterns in Australia over the study period. The study findings suggest that prescribing of oral atypicals remain relatively high and ALAT prescribing remains low, particularly among General Practitioners.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government Department of Health, 2011, People living with psychotic illness 2010: Report on the second Australian national survey.