

# 3<sup>rd</sup> International Summit on GMP, GCP & Quality Control

September 25-26, 2014 Valencia Convention Centre, Spain

## Prescription pattern of psychotropic medicines at a neuropsychiatric hospital in Nigeria; A drug utilisation study

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**Background:** The study analysed the prescription pattern and associated costs of psychotropic drugs at the outpatient unit of a mental health facility in Nigeria, to assess and document information for enhancing rational and cost-effective use of psychotropic medicines.

**Methods:** A retrospective analysis of prescription records covering 8 September and 28 October 2008, was carried out using the WHO recommended use indicators, adapted for mental health care. Data was analysed for number of drugs, number of prescriptions, cost of prescription and cost per defined daily dose (DDD).

**Results:** 1,756 prescriptions were analysed. Each prescription contained an average of 2.1 ( $\pm 0.75$ ) drugs, at a cost of US\$7.03 ( $\pm$  US\$13.72). Antipsychotics accounted for the highest number of prescribed drugs in 82% (1441/1756) of the prescriptions, followed by antidepressants, 13%. Anxiolytics and bipolar agents were each prescribed in 7% of total prescriptions respectively. Atypical antipsychotics were the most expensive psychotropics at a mean cost per DDD of US\$1.56 ( $\pm$  US\$0.63), about 35 times the average cost per DDD of traditional psychotropics which cost US\$0.045 ( $\pm$  US\$0.17) as the cheapest, accounting for over 90% of total prescriptions.

**Conclusion:** Typical antipsychotics were the most prescribed psychotropic drugs, suggesting psychosis as the prevalent mental health disorders in the environment. Significant antipsychotic-antipsychotic combinations indicate scope for improving the use of antipsychotics. Average cost of prescription reflects the economic status of patients' population where cost appears to be the major consideration of choice of prescribers, limiting the use of newer and better tolerated psychotropics. Policy measures are required to improve access to the utilisation of newer psychotropics for enhanced quality of life of patients.

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