

Medicines used in Mental Health

Years 2006/07 to 2016/17

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About this release

This release by Information Services Division (ISD) Scotland updates the medicines used in mental health in Scotland for years between 2006/07 and 2016/17. Data on five types of drugs are included: hypnotics and anxiolytics (used to treat insomnia and anxiety), antipsychotics and related drugs, antidepressants, drugs used for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and drugs for dementia. This data is based on community prescribing and excludes hospital usage.

Key points

- Dispensing of antipsychotics, antidepressants, drugs for ADHD and drugs for dementia has been steadily increasing over the past ten years. Dispensing of hypnotics and anxiolytics has remained stable in the past ten years.
- There is an overall trend of increasing total cost for antidepressants and ADHD. This reflects increased usage. The cost for hypnotics and anxiolytics also increased between 2015/16 and 2016/17. There has been a decrease in cost for antipsychotics and dementia drugs. This is primarily due to reductions in drug prices and drugs coming out of patent.
- All of the mental health drugs considered in this report show a consistent pattern of increasing volume dispensed with increasing patient deprivation. For elderly patients dispensed dementia drugs this pattern is less pronounced but still evident.
- For most of these groups of mental health drugs there are substantially more drugs dispensed to females than males. The exception to this is ADHD, where 80% of dispensing is to males.
- There is wide variation in dispensing of mental health drugs between NHS Boards, reflecting different populations and methods of service delivery.

Background

Information on drugs which are indicated for mental health conditions are obtained from NHS prescriptions that are prescribed in Scotland and that are dispensed in Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom. All these prescriptions are dispensed by community pharmacies and dispensing doctors. GPs write the vast majority of these prescriptions with the remainder written by authorised prescribers such as nurses and dentists. Also included are prescriptions written in hospitals that were dispensed in the community, but exclude prescriptions dispensed within hospitals. Items which are purchased over the counter are excluded.

Patient based analysis is also included in the publication. All NHS patients have a unique Community Health Index (CHI) number which makes it possible to identify which prescription items have been dispensed for individual patients. Prior to April 2009, the proportion of prescriptions with a valid CHI number recorded was not comprehensive enough to make patient based analysis possible. For medicines used in mental health, CHI capture rates have improved, becoming high enough to permit accurate patient analyses from financial years 2009/10 onwards.

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Find out more

The Information Services Division publishes a range of prescribing-related information. You can find all our information on the [prescribing and medicines section of the ISD website](#).

Further information and supporting Excel tables can be found in the [Medicines Used In Mental Health report](#).

The next update of this publication will be in October 2018.

ISD and Official Statistics

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