Medicines used in Mental Health
Years 2009/10 to 2018/19

A National Statistics publication for Scotland

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About this release

This release by Information Services Division (ISD) Scotland updates the information on medicines used in mental health in Scotland between 2009/10 and 2018/19. 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 the treatment of dementia. These data are based on community prescribing and exclude hospital usage.

Main Points

- Dispensing of antipsychotics, antidepressants, drugs for ADHD and drugs for dementia has been steadily increasing over the past ten years. The number of patients prescribed antidepressants has increased by 48% since 2009/10. Dispensing of hypnotics and anxiolytics has remained fairly stable.

- The cost to NHS Scotland for antidepressants and ADHD drugs has increased in the past ten years, which reflects an increase in usage. The cost for dementia drugs has decreased in the past ten years, primarily due to reductions in drug prices and drugs coming out of patent. Cost of antipsychotics and of hypnotics and anxiolytics has been more variable over the past ten years due to periods of drug shortages.
• All of the mental health drugs considered in this report show more use of mental health drugs by people living in more deprived areas. For dementia drugs this pattern is less pronounced. This corresponds with evidence that people living in deprived areas report poorer mental wellbeing.

• For four out of the five groups of mental health drugs there are substantially more drugs dispensed to females than males. The exception to this is ADHD, where almost 80% of dispensing is to males.

Background

Information on drugs which are indicated for mental health conditions is 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. The figures include prescriptions written in hospitals that were dispensed in the community, but exclude prescriptions dispensed within hospitals and prisons. Items which are purchased over the counter are excluded.

A number of analytical changes have been made to this report compared to previous publications, the main change being that the main measure of medicine use has changed from number of items to patient level Defined Daily Doses. See the full report for more details.

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Further Information

Find out more in the full report. The data from this publication is available to download from our web page along with a background information and glossary, and metadata document. For more information on Mental Health see the Mental Health section of our website. For related topics, please see the Prescribing and Medicines pages.

The next release of this publication will be 23 October 2020.