Original Research Article

Prescription pattern of medicines in a tertiary care hospital: a cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Background: Prescribing drugs for any disease is not complete until it is rationally done. Irrational prescriptions often lead to treatment failure, toxicity or drug interactions which may prove detrimental to the patient. Antibiotics are very much prescribed in day to day practice but their rational use prevents treatment failure, resistance.

Methods: A cross sectional study was conducted in a tertiary care hospital to see the antibiotic prescribing pattern. Prescriptions were screened one time from different OPDs with prior permission from the doctor attending the respective OPD.

Results: A total of 200 prescriptions were assessed out of which 121 had monotherapies prescribed, 79 had FDCs. Antibiotics were the most commonly prescribed drugs. Prescriptions having drug combinations were assessed and pantoprazole domperidone was the most commonly prescribed (32.91%).

Conclusions: Drugs should be prescribed rationally for proper therapeutic benefit. It encourages the patient to properly use the medicine and properly comply to it.

Keywords: Antibiotics, Fixed drug combinations, Generic drugs, Injectables, Prescription, Trend

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, medicines play an unprecedented role which has reduced mortality, morbidity and over all quality of life.¹ Rational use of medicine is the backbone of good clinical practice. As per Alma Atta declaration also, proper treatment of commonly occurring disease and injuries is essential.² Rational prescribing is purely in the hands of the prescriber. Prescription eventually decides whether the medicine will benefit or harm the patient. Antibiotics are one of the important pillars of medical care and are very useful in treatment or prophylaxis of infections. The availability, selection and proper use of antibiotics is very important to avoid resistance and for proper benefit of the patient.³,⁴ Essential medicines are those which are available at all the times and satisfy the health care needs of all the people as per WHO.⁵ In view of this medicines which do not meet the needs of patients in terms of disease condition, dose, frequency, duration of therapy is termed as irrational use of medicine.⁶ Rational use of medicine encourages the patient to rightly use medicine and properly comply to it. It also prevents
irrational use of drug combinations which have no added
effect on therapeutic value and increased burden of cost.
Cost effective prescribing is also important in developing
country like ours.

Antibiotics are main line of treatment in case of infections
like upper respiratory infection, lower respiratory tract
infection, urinary tract infections, skin infections,
gastrointestinal tract infections etc. Antibiotics also have a
prophylactic role in case of various conditions like in
surgeries, pre-term labour and many other clinical
conditions. Irrational antibiotic use includes improper
dose, improper duration, improper combinations, improper
indications. This may lead to antibiotic resistance. Ideally
culture sensitivity test should be done before prescribing
antibiotics. The present study was conducted to have an
audit about the prescribing trend of antibiotics to have an
insight about its rational and irrational use. Irrational use
of antibiotics often adds to economic burden, disease
burden and decreases the quality of life.

METHODS

A cross sectional study was conducted in a tertiary care
clinic to see the antibiotic prescribing pattern. A total of
200 prescriptions were assessed. Prior permission was
taken from Institutional Ethics Committee, GMC Jammu,
India. In Medicine Out Patient Department prescriptions
were screened one time randomly. Prior permission was
taken from the doctor attending the OPD. No follow up
was done. The prescriptions were screened for different
parameters like medicine prescribed, dose form of
medicine, drug combinations, monotherapies prescribed.
Rationality of drug combinations was also assessed.
Mobile was used to take a click of prescription. The patient
was made to understand the purpose of this before taking
the prescription. The same methodology was followed for
a period of one week. It was a cross sectional study. The
data was tabulated and was expressed in percentage.

Inclusion criteria includes all the prescriptions from
medicine OPD for the said period. Exclusion criteria
includes follow up prescriptions from emergency were not
assessed.

RESULTS

Table 1: Prescription pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Number (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total prescriptions</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptions having monotherapy</td>
<td>121 (60.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptions having injections</td>
<td>34 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptions having FDCs</td>
<td>79 (39.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptions having generic drugs</td>
<td>39 (19.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptions having herbal drugs</td>
<td>12 (6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 200 prescriptions were assessed out of which 121
(60.5%) had monotherapies prescribed, 79 (39.5%) had
FDCs, 34 (17%) prescriptions had injections prescribed, 39
(19.5%) prescriptions had generic drugs, 12 (6%) had
herbal drugs (Table 1).

There were 57 (28.5%) prescriptions had antibiotics,
followed by proton pump inhibitors in 50 (25%) prescriptions,
20 (10%) prescriptions had painkillers and anti-hypertensives
each. 35 (17.5%) prescriptions had anti-diabetic drugs, 23
(11.5%) had anti-arrhythmic drugs. Only 9 (4.5%) prescriptions
had anti-gout drugs and only 6 (3%) prescriptions had anti
lipidemic drugs (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of prescriptions having different
classes of drugs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug Class</th>
<th>Number (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antibiotics</td>
<td>57 (28.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painkillers</td>
<td>20 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antihypertensives</td>
<td>20 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antidiabetic drugs</td>
<td>35 (17.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypolipidemic drugs</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proton pump inhibitors</td>
<td>50 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-gout drugs</td>
<td>9 (4.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antirheumatoid drugs</td>
<td>23 (11.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>20 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Number of prescriptions having different
drug combinations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug combinations</th>
<th>Number (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amoxicillin clavulanate</td>
<td>5 (6.32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceftriaxone sulbactam</td>
<td>2 (2.53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piperacillin tazobactam</td>
<td>1 (1.26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofloxacin ornidazole</td>
<td>6 (7.59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfloxacin Tinidazole</td>
<td>3 (3.79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cefixime clavulanic acid</td>
<td>2 (2.53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSAIDs Muscle relaxant</td>
<td>12 (15.18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paracetamol ibuprofen</td>
<td>5 (6.32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cefixime azithromycin</td>
<td>1 (1.26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cefpodoxime clavulanic acid</td>
<td>2 (2.53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diclofenac sodium and rabeprazole</td>
<td>3 (3.79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantoprazole domperidone</td>
<td>26 (32.91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trimethoprim sulphamethoxazole</td>
<td>2 (2.53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>9 (11.39%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prescriptions having drug combinations were assessed and
pantoprazole domperidone was the most commonly
prescribed 62 (32.91%), 12 (15.18%) had NSAIDs muscle
relaxant, amoxicillin clavulanate was prescribed in
5 (6.32%) prescriptions, ceftriaxone sulbactam in 2 (2.53%),
piperacillin tazobactam and cefixime
azithromycin was prescribed in 1 (1.26%) prescription
each, ofloxacin ornidazole was prescribed in 6 (7.59%)
prescriptions, norfloxacin tinidazole in 3 (3.79%), cefixime
clavulanic acid, trimethoprim sulphamethoxazole and
DISCUSSION

Monotherapy was more commonly prescribed than FDCs. In our study 39.5% of prescriptions had FDCs. FDC is pharmacologically acceptable only if the combination has a proven therapeutic and safety advantage over single ingredients administered separately. The pharmacological rationality of FDCs is established if drugs act by different mechanisms and have supra-additive effect, have similar pharmacokinetics profile, and drugs do not have supraadditive toxicity. However, irrational prescribing of FDCs is a major health concern in India as irrational fixed dose combination products can be equally harmful. Many of the FDC available in Indian market lack therapeutic rationale for their use, leading to wasteful expenditure.

Most commonly prescribed FDC was pantoprazole domperidone followed by muscle relaxant NSAID combination, and others. Most of the FDCs (62%) were rational as per WHO Essential Medicine List. Other FDCs 38% were irrationally prescribed. Polypharmacy, as well as inappropriate prescribing, is a major challenge that contributes to costs, adverse drug events, confusion, compliance issues, and errors in management. A systematic approach to drug monitoring is an important aspect of appropriate prescribing. The findings of this study further showed that the percentage of medicines prescribed by generic was 19.5% which is less than the requirement that all medicines should be prescribed in generic. This further call for refresher training for prescribers to confirm to the standards in prescribing medicines for patients as rational use of medicines has become an indicator for measuring quality of health care.

In our study 17% of prescriptions had injectable drugs prescribed. Globally, the use injections should be kept to the minimum because of the increasing risk of transmission of HIV, hepatitis and other blood related diseases through injection. The low rate of injection use is also likely to reduce the risk of anaphylactic shock, tissue necrosis and sepsis in patients. This study has several limitations. It is a cross sectional study. Number of prescriptions assessed is also less. Duration is short. Other parameters of a prescription like drug interactions could have been assessed.

CONCLUSION

Rational use of medicine is the backbone of rational prescribing of drugs. The present study highlights that drugs are not prescribed by generic names, irrational FDCs are also being prescribed which can prove to be detrimental. There is a need to stress upon the rational use of drugs for right indication, right duration at appropriate dose.

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Conflict of interest: None declared
Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of GMC Jammu, India

REFERENCES

13. Wagner AK, Quick JD, Ross-Degnan D. Quality use of medicines within universal health coverage: challenges and opportunities. BMC Health Serv Res. 2014;14:357.
