

Therapeutic Notes have Limited Impact on Physician Prescribing Behaviours for some Drugs

Approximately half of initial prescriptions for aliskiren and sitagliptin were prescribed in a manner that did not conform to therapeutic note recommendations.

What does this mean?

- Guidance regarding appropriate and cost-effective use of prescription drugs is published in the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) formulary in the form of ‘therapeutic notes’.
- Approximately half of patients who started either aliskiren or sitagliptin did not meet the clinical criteria described in the formulary, and less than one-quarter of physicians consistently followed these recommendations

Policy Implications

- ✓ Given the high rate of non-conformance to therapeutic notes, policy-makers may wish to implement other mechanisms to influence prescriber behavior to improve the quality and efficacy of health care.
- ✓ Further research is needed to determine non-conformance rates for other medications listed on the ODB formulary.

How do we know this?

The ODPRN conducted a serial cross-sectional study of all residents of Ontario aged 66 and older who received a new prescription for one of two drugs, aliskiren or sitagliptin. These drugs were selected because the therapeutic notes were stable over time and they specified clinical criteria that could be operationalized using administrative databases. We defined non-conformance in the aliskiren cohort as the absence of a prescription for both a thiazide diuretic and either an angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor (ACEi) or an angiotensin II receptor blocker (ARB) during the 120 days prior to the aliskiren prescription. For the sitagliptin cohort, we defined non-conformance as the absence of a prescription for metformin at the maximum dose of 2,000 mg/day during the 120 days prior to the sitagliptin prescription. Overall, 11,967 (n=23,291;51.4%) patients received prescriptions for aliskiren that did not conform to the therapeutic notes criteria; 21,308 (n=43,196; 49.3%) patients received prescriptions for sitagliptin that did not conform to the therapeutic notes criteria. There were 3,608 physicians who initiated patients on aliskiren and 6,421 physicians who initiated patients on sitagliptin during the study period. Among these physicians, the majority were male and approximately 80% were general practitioners or family physicians. None of the observed prescriber characteristics were strongly associated with non-conformance.

This Research Minute was created by the ODPRN.

Hildebrand A, Yao Z, Gomes T, Camacho X, Garg A, Juurlink D, Mamdani M, Dhalla I. Adherence to Prescribing Recommendations Made on a Provincial Formulary. *Healthcare Policy*, 9(4) May 2014:20-30.

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