

The Italian National Drug Use Monitoring Center

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Introduction

Prescribing indicators for general practice have been used in National Health Services (NHS) for over two decades. Recently, a National Drug Monitoring Center has been established in Italy. General aim of the Center is to support national and regional health authorities in the promotion of rational drug use.

Methods

Outpatient prescriptions within the NHS are provided through the 16,000 pharmacies. The ATC classification has been used as a reference, and further subgroups were considered on the basis of homogeneity of clinical indications. DDD/1,000 inhabitants die were adopted to describe levels of use in the population. In the comparison among regions, drug consumption has been referred to the weighted population (by age and sex).

Results

The 1st National Report examines data of the 1st half of the year 2000 (www.sanita.it/osmed). The NHS expenditure varies greatly among regions: from 125.000 Italian lire per capita in Trentino to 219.000 in Campania. Compared to the first semester of 1999, an 18% increase in expenditure was observed. The main reason for the increase was (10,5%) the raise in number Defined Daily Doses (DDDs); 1,7% was explained by the raise in drug prices; a further 3% is attributable to the shift of prescription on more expensive formulations. Only 16 substances were responsible for 25% of the total cost of drugs. Cardiovascular medicinal products and especially antihypertensive drugs account for the largest proportion of all prescriptions: 48% of DDDs/1,000 inhabitants die, and 32% of the total cost of drugs.

The most prescribed cardiovascular subgroup was Calcioantagonists whereas prescription rate of statins is below the European average. There was high difference from North vs. South Italy in prescriptions (DDDs) and expenditure of antinfectives. In particular, parenteral antibiotics (mainly, third generation cefalosporin) which account for 34% of the total cost of antibiotics.