Reviewer’s report

Title: Clinical characteristics related to antipsychotic combination treatment in patients with schizophrenia: Data from a Norwegian catchment area

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Reviewer: Alkomiet Hasan

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting and well written report of a study investigating combination treatment in patients with schizophrenia in a naturalistic setting. The main finding is, that “the number of hospital admissions and GAF score correlated significantly with the prescription of combination treatment”. The sample size is adequate and the hypotheses are clearly stated. In general the main question is very important and the discrepancies between guidelines and real – life treatment are a well – known phenomena. The main result of the study supplements (results are in line with other studies) the knowledge about the reasons of combination treatment.

Major comments and general comments (Major Compulsory Revisions):

These comments focus mainly on sociodemographic and clinical parameters. Due to the naturalistic study design, it is evident, that not every point could be responded, but it would nice to get some more information concerning the study group. If more data concerning disease course and psychopathology is available, it would be nice to include them into the statistical analysis. However, the authors mentioned in their discussion that, “a better discrimination between subgroups of patients with different clinical courses of the illness is therefore needed when proposing new recommendations”. So, it may be, that these data (DUP, DUI, PANSS etc..) is not available in this sample.

1. It would be very nice to see more sociodemographic and clinical parameters of the patients. Especially mean age, onset age of schizophrenia, Duration of psychosis and duration of illness are importing.

2. Beside using the WHO defined daily doses, it would be nice to see the dosages of Antipsychotics according to CPZ.

3. I would suggest to present a table with sociodemographic data and to describe the study sample and the results in detail.

4. Is psychopathological data available (e.g. PANSS)? Is data concerning non – responders to monotherapy available.

5. Is it possible to do a separate analysis comparing out – and inpatients? Is there a gender effect?

Introduction: Introduction is well – arranged and comprehensive

Discretionary Revisions: Title and abstract: Abstract is well – written, but “clinical characteristics” is too generic because only the GAF was assessed.
Minor Essential Revisions: Methods: Sample should be described more in detail. Was it a prospective or retrospective design?

Minor Essential Revisions: Results: Results well – arranged and comprehensive. The aforementioned parameters should be included, if available. It is noteworthy that SGA are very highly subscribed, which may be led back the local health care system or to the schizophrenia symptoms (negative > positive?). The fact that no patient had haloperidol and only one flupentixol in their medication is really interesting. The low prescription rate of clozapine, which is an often used combination partner, is interesting, too (see reference No. 26). Can these results led back to “local guidelines”?

Discussion: Discussion is comprehensive and some important study limitations are clearly stated.

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Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I have been invited to scientific congresses by Astra Zeneca, Lundbeck and Janssen Cilag but this is not related to this report. Therefore, I declare that I have no competing interests.