Reviewer's report

Title: Prescribing trends of antipsychotics in youth receiving income assistance: results from a retrospective population database study

Version: 1 Date: 7 February 2013

Reviewer: Andrew Bulloch

Reviewer's report:

This report thoroughly describes trends in antipsychotic (AP) prescribing for youth in Nova Scotia over an 8 year period (2000-2007). The focus is on patients 25 years old and younger who receive income assistance. The data is drawn from prescription drug coverage (Pharmacare) as provide by the Department of Community Services in Nova Scotia.

This is a very thorough and thoughtful analysis that is broad and illustrates lots of findings. In fact not all of the data is completely described! (see below). The limitations of this kind of pharmacoepidemiology (non-adherence, dispensation information etc) are all acknowledged at the end of the Discussion.

Major revisions:

1. The procedure to define the most attributable diagnoses for Pharmacare prescriptions needs further explanation. This was based on literature and clinical experience. Perhaps some examples would clarify exactly how this occurs. This is a critical issue.
2. Fig 4 is very briefly described. Are there trends re the age groups? If not say so.
3. Ditto re Fig 5. Some disorders stand out, as pointed out, whereas others are remarkably similar…any other trends?
4. Ditto re Fig 6!
5. The reviews in CJP (Dec 2012) in this area should be cited and integrated into the text.

Minor revisions: A few points of clarification would aid the reader:

1. Re Table 2, the codes are for Bipolar I, why was Bipolar II excluded?
2. Figures: it is hard to discern one shade of line from another. Different types of broken lines could be used, or color if the journal is agreeable. Perhaps the journal can assist here. Similar comment re bars eg in Fig 3.
3. The legend for Fig 2, although obvious, needs explanation (“FGA” etc)
4. Costs section: how do they compare to inflation?
5. Discussion: first two paragraphs are very wordy and somewhat speculative…could be shortened.
Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

none