Reviewer's report

Title: Schizophrenia clinical guidelines and clozapine prescribing: a review

Version: 1  Date: 19 December 2013

Reviewer: Michele Hill

Reviewer's report:

This is a review on clozapine prescribing and the role pharmacists can play in its initiation and monitoring. Its main objective is to provide information in view of its proven effectiveness. It is therefore an important article as clozapine continues to be underutilised in clinical settings.

Major Revisions

The abstract, background and summary are clear and succinct but in my view the article itself does not adhere to this structure and is unwieldy with unnecessary sections on other medications and general guidelines. This is reflected in the title which is too broad for the length of the article. I suggest limiting the title and article to focus on clozapine prescribing. The historical background could be shortened to one paragraph and clozapine vs other antipsychotic medications limited to comparisons of clozapine and other medications (vs FGAs and SGAs) i.e. effectiveness of clozapine. The paragraph entitled “Ongoing Challenges” reflects the overall lack of structure to the article and could be shortened to define treatment resistance and placed in the section on guidelines.

It is only in the section “Clozapine Prescribing Trends” that the authors begin to address their stated aims and this is quite late in the article. I therefore suggest moving this section to the beginning or at least to an earlier point.

The authors only very briefly address why physicians might be slow to prescribe and I think it would be prudent to include sections on the mortality and morbidity associated with clozapine with more information in relation to numbers affected etc. The balance of effectiveness versus cost (in terms of side effects and burdensome monitoring) needs to addressed further.

Minor Revisions

Paragraph two in ongoing challenges – “there are no specific patient or disease characteristics that enable a definitive diagnosis of treatment-resistant schizophrenia prior to treatment with schizophrenia” is unclear.

Discretionary Revisions

Suggest more information on clozapine clinics – weight, cardiovascular, lifestyle monitoring in addition to WBC monitoring.

Suggest inclusion of Tiihonen et al, Aug 2009 Lancet article which shows lowest rates of mortality in clozapine in 11 year population study

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 declare that I have no competing interests