Antidepressant use in Australia and Sweden – A cross-country comparison

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Background

• Antidepressant use has increased over recent decades (1-6)
• Most antidepressants are prescribed for depression and anxiety disorders (7), two of the most common causes for years lived with disability (8)
• Australia and Sweden are among the top five users of antidepressants in the OECD (1)

Purpose: We aimed to compare the trends in dispensed use of antidepressants in Australia and Sweden from 2006 to 2018 in the context of clinical guidelines

Methods

• Retrospective time series of drug utilisation of publicly available data, measured as defined daily dose per 1,000 (DDD/1000/d)

Results

• Antidepressant use increased in both Australia and Sweden
• Australia had a more rapid increase resulting in a higher total use
• The utilisation profile was similar in both countries:
  o SSRIs were the most commonly used group
  o ‘Other antidepressants’ group increased most
  o Seven of the eight most used antidepressants were the same
  o Differences in most prescribed antidepressants:
    o Australia: escitalopram, sertraline
    o Sweden: mirtazapine, sertraline, citalopram

Conclusions

• Differences between the countries may be attributed to factors related to medical, contextual and policy evidence.
• Differences may reflect varying accessibility of treatments, national programs enhancing mental health literacy in the population, clinical prescribing guidelines and timing of approval of new antidepressants.

References