



- Title** Preventive Outpatient Treatment in Affective Disorders. Results From a Health Technology Assessment (HTA)
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- Reference** Medicinsk Teknologivurdering – puljeprojekter 2006; 6(9). ISBN 87-7676-352-8 (online):
www.sst.dk/publ/Publ2006/CEMTV/Affektive_lidelser/affektive_lidelser.pdf

Aim

To review the courses of depressive and bipolar disorders and discuss whether prophylactic interventions influence the courses of these disorders.

Conclusions and results

In response to a nationwide questionnaire survey of patients with major affective disorder, undertaken in 2003 in relation to the present HTA, more than half of the patients stated that they would prefer to receive outpatient treatment at a central, specialized treatment facility rather than from their usual therapist.

Little evidence was found regarding how concrete organizational measures can best ensure optimum treatment of patients with major affective disorders. The HTA discusses 2 models of organization. One consists of decentralized outpatient treatment by practicing psychiatrists or general practitioners. In the other model, some patients may also be treated in centralized outpatient clinics offering combination therapy involving pharmacotherapy and psychological treatment.

Based on results from clinical trials, it is estimated that systematic outpatient treatment with prophylactic pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy/psychoeducation can reduce bed days by 20% in patients admitted with depressive disorder and by 40% in patients admitted with bipolar disorder in the first year after discharge, compared to patients who do not receive such systematic treatment.

Bed days must be reduced by at least 10% to 15% in 2 years to cover the cost of centralized outpatient clinics.

Recommendations

Regarding outpatient treatment for patients with depressive or bipolar affective disorder, it is recommended that consideration be given to supplementing the current organization with 5 to 10 specialized clinics. This corresponds to 1 or 2 clinics in each of the coming 5 administrative regions of Denmark.

Methods

The international literature was systematically reviewed. Furthermore, the HTA includes a nation-wide questionnaire survey (autumn 2003) of patients and a nation-wide questionnaire survey (autumn 2003) of head doctors at psychiatric hospitals throughout Denmark. The technology section includes a systematic review of the literature on treatment, including prophylactic pharmacotherapy, and prophylactic combination therapy involving pharmacotherapy and psychological treatment.