SSRI Efficacy in Treating Major Depressive Disorder: Preliminary Findings

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Background:

Conflicting evidence on the relative effectiveness of second-generation antidepressants has made initial management of major depressive disorder (MDD) complex and frequently results in a trial-and-error-based approach to treatment. With recent literature suggesting serotonin plays no significant role in the etiology of depression, further investigation of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) as a first-line treatment of MDD is warranted.

Methods:

A retrospective chart review of patients 18 years or older visiting the Fort Wayne Family Medicine Center and completing a Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) or Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale (GAD) from January 2020 through May 2023 was performed. Comparative analysis of PHQ and GAD scores was performed to determine if any differences in treatment management outcomes were present between SSRI therapy and other treatment approaches.

Results:

1,502 patients met the inclusion criteria. Due to time constraints, a sample of 45 patients (10 males, 35 females) was selected and preliminary results are as follows: After initiating treatment with an SSRI, 14 (42.4%) PHQ scores and 7 (24.1%) GAD scores demonstrated improved disease severity. After initiating treatment with another antidepressant class, 10 (31.3%) PHQ scores and 17 (48.6%) GAD scores demonstrated improved disease severity. There was no significant difference ($p=0.351$) in treatment outcomes between antidepressant class in terms of PHQ results, but a significant difference ($p=0.044$) was found between groups with regards to GAD results.

Conclusions:

This study describes preliminary findings on the current patterns of care for mental health within a primary care setting and demonstrates antidepressant classes appear equally efficacious in treating depression. However, anxiety management outcomes appear to be influenced by antidepressant class administered. Future analysis will include the entire available dataset and produce more robust results from which to improve patient-specific and community health outcomes.