

OUTPATIENT PRESCRIPTION WRITING QUALITY IN A PAEDIATRIC GENERAL HOSPITAL

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BACKGROUND

The writing of prescriptions is an important aspect of medical practice. This activity presents some particular problems given the risk of interpretation and dispensing errors in community pharmacies.

OBJECTIVES

To assess the quality of drug prescriptions for patients discharged from our paediatric general hospital.

SETTING

Outpatient clinic of a paediatric general hospital.

METHODS

Copies of prescriptions written by physicians were collected from community pharmacies in the region of the HEL for a two-month period (January and February 2005). They were analysed according to standard criteria regarding both formal and pharmaceutical aspects [1, 2].

Drug prescriptions were classified as:

- a) **complete** when all criteria for safety were fulfilled,
- b) **ambiguous** when there was a danger of a dispensing error because of one or more criteria missing, or
- c) containing an **error**.

The clinical relevance of the prescriptions has not been assessed.

RESULTS

Fig. 1 : Analysed prescriptions



Table 1 : The 10 most prescribed drugs

No	Drug	n	%
1	Paracetamol	370	23.6
2	Ibuprofen	246	15.7
3	Sodium chloride	168	10.7
4	Chlorhexidine - oxybuprocaine	69	4.4
5	Amoxicillin	63	4.0
6	Oxomemazine - guaifenesin	46	2.9
7	Co-amoxiclav	37	2.4
8	Salbutamol	36	2.3
9	Mefenamic acid	34	2.2
10	Xylometazoline	33	2.1
		1102	70.2

Fig. 2 : Formal criteria regarding the prescribers (n = 651)

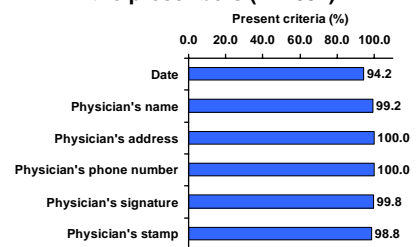


Fig. 3 : Formal criteria regarding the patients (n = 651)

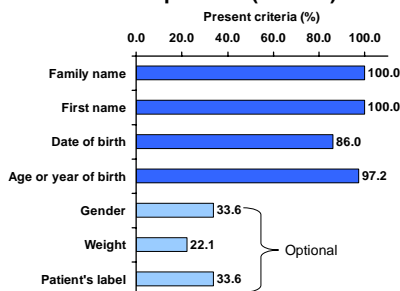


Fig. 4 : Formal criteria regarding the medicines (n = 1370)

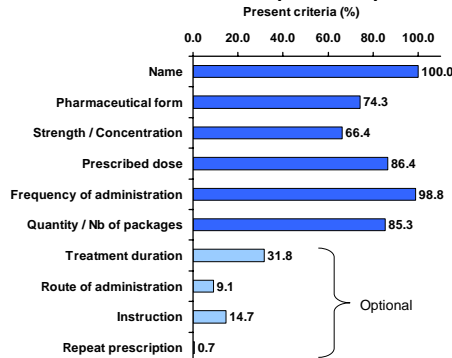


Table 2 : Quality of prescriptions

	%
Complete prescriptions	51.5
Incomplete prescriptions	48.5
Unambiguous	37.2
Ambiguous	11.3
Prescribing errors	3.1

Table 3 : Prescribing errors

Types of errors	n
Incorrect strength or concentration	15
Incorrect quantity or nb of packages	12
Incorrect pharmaceutical form	9
Incorrect prescribed dose or frequency	7
Total	43

CONCLUSION

- This study showed that physicians' prescriptions comprised numerous omissions, but few errors.
- Seventy percent of the lines of prescriptions had one (or more) of the 10 most frequently prescribed drugs.
- Before full computerised prescription becomes available, courses on drug prescription are being given regularly to physicians to alert them of these problems.

REFERENCES

- [1] Rosenfeld T et al. Réglementation et contrôle à l'échelle fédérale des produits thérapeutiques. In: Bases de la thérapeutique médicamenteuse. Basel: Documed. 2005; 306-313.
- [2] ASHP guidelines on preventing medication errors in hospitals. Am J Hosp Pharm 1993;50:305-314.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Nothing to disclose.

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