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The Use of Psychotropic Drugs Among Children in Out-of-home Care in Sweden

P. Salmi¹, M. Berlin¹

¹Epidemiology, National Board of Health and Welfare, Stockholm, Sweden

Introduction

There are concerns that children in out-of-home care take psychotropic drugs at a much higher rate than other children and that some treatments might be inappropriate.

Objective

To study the prescription of psychotropic drugs to children in out-of-home care in Sweden.

Aim

To describe the prevalent use of psychotropic drugs among children in out-of-home care in Sweden and pinpoint possible inappropriate treatment.

Method

Data on drugs dispensed from the national Swedish Prescribed Drug Register for 2013. Individuals with at least three dispensations were defined as users and included in the study.

Results

A widespread use of different types of psychotropic drugs was found among children in out-of-home care in Sweden. The concurrent use of methylphenidate and antipsychotics was notable – about 20% of the children were simultaneously treated with these drugs.

Conclusion

Children in out-of-home care take psychotropic drugs at a much higher rate than other children in Sweden. Evidence supporting effectiveness and safety of certain treatments is lacking.