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LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Response to "Prevalence of antidepressant use in Brazil: a systematic review with meta-analysis"

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Tiguman et al. provide a comprehensive view of the prevalence of antidepressant use in Brazil, a highly relevant topic considering the global increase in the burden of mental illness and the importance of understanding medication use patterns in low- and middle-income countries.[1]

They found a 4.0% prevalence of antidepressant use, which is significantly lower than that of high-income countries such as the United States, where 13% of adults have used antidepressants. This difference can be explained by several factors, including unequal access to mental health services, differences in prescription practices, and treatment preferences. Furthermore, the lower prevalence of antidepressant use in Brazil may reflect access barriers to adequate mental health care, as pointed out in studies comparing antidepressant use between countries with different income levels.[2]

The study reports that antidepressant use is higher among women and the elderly, a trend also observed in other countries. Research indicates that women are more likely to seek care for depressive symptoms and to be diagnosed with depression, while men often underreport depressive symptoms and are less likely to seek treatment. In addition, older adults are often exposed to antidepressants for extended periods, increasing the risk of polypharmacy and potentially inappropriate prescriptions, especially due to comorbidities and greater sensitivity to adverse drug effects.[3-6]

It is also important to note that, in addition to antidepressants, the concomitant use of other psychotropic drugs, such as anxiolytics and antipsychotics, should be considered. Studies suggest that patients treated with antidepressants often use other psychotropic medications as well, which may increase the risk of adverse effects and drug interactions. These data reinforce the need for careful monitoring and an integrated approach to mental health treatment.[7,8]

Another important point is the need for investment in pharmaceutical services to monitor the rational use of antidepressants, especially among vulnerable groups, such as older adults. The appropriate prescription of antidepressants for this population is crucial, considering the potential for adverse reactions and the need to avoid indiscriminate use.[5,6]

Furthermore, we suggest that future research explore more detailed therapeutic subgroups of the most commonly used antidepressants in Brazil and their correlations with specific psychiatric diagnoses. This approach could provide valuable information for the development of more effective and targeted public health policies.

In conclusion, Tiguman et al. have significantly contributed to the understanding of antidepressant use in Brazil. Coordinated effort between researchers, health care professionals, and policymakers is needed to promote the rational and safe use of these medications, especially among vulnerable populations.

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Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest.

Author contributions

FG: Writing – review & editing; methodology.
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RB: Conceptualization; Data curation.
VV: Supervision; Validation; Resources; Project administration.
CEMM: Supervision; Validation; Resources; Project administration.
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