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MEETING ABSTRACT

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Prescription of psychostimulants in Austria, 2006–2014

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Background: Psychostimulants are drugs acting on the central nervous system, intended to improve mental and/or physical functions such as alertness and wakefulness. Today's most important medical indication lies in the treatment of the attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a condition that is subject to controversial discussion regarding prevalence, (under)diagnosis and (over)treatment. This study analyses the prescription data of stimulants in Austria in the years 2006 to 2014.

Methods: Data from all prescriptions filled in Austrian pharmacies on public expense by outpatients (2006–2012) were obtained from the Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions (Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger). Prescriptions and costs of CNS stimulants were analysed in detail using WHO drug statistic methodologies.

Results: Prescriptions filled in Austrian pharmacies on public expense by outpatients steadily rose from 770,000 (2006) to over 2,000,000 defined daily doses in 2014, public expenses on psychostimulants rose from €1,780,000 to €5,120,000. Deducted from these crude figures and population data, 4 children/adolescents (5–19 years of age) out of 1,000 received a one-year pharmacotherapy with psychostimulants in 2014.

Discussion: Use of and treatment with psychostimulants bear a history of unfavourable side effects (especially after long-term use), abuse, misuse and revocation of approvals. ADHD itself, its diagnosis and treatment have always been controversial. Austrian prescription data demonstrate a generally cautious prescription practice with—in contrast to other countries—worrisome constant increase in prescription numbers.

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