

The Pharmacy Connection

A forum for pharmacy related news and updates for DMH programs

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A Message from the Medical Director, Roderick Shaner, M.D.

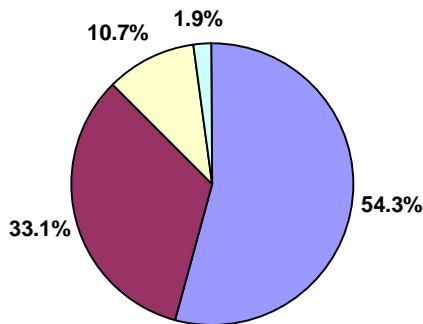
There is an overwhelmingly strong evidence base for the judicious use of psychopharmacologic interventions in certain disorders of childhood. However, all of us who prescribe to children are aware of public disquiet regarding use of psychiatric medications in this age group. Excessive polypharmacy is the lightning rod for these concerns. There is essentially no credible evidence base for the efficacy of such practices, and plenty of evidence of risk.

On December 2, 2011, ABC aired a four-part segment on 20/20 covering the topic of foster children and medication [Click the following link to view episode: <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/video/foster-kids-meds-finding-solutions-congress-hearing-foster-care-psychotropic-drugs-2020-15077829>]

Some may find this program painful to watch. First, because it appears to show kids badly treated and suffering. Second, because it misses some opportunities to educate parents and guardians about recognizing the hallmarks and benefits of good treatment. The highly watched episode also puts us on notice that our own practices will be under increasing scrutiny.

The good news is that the majority of our LAC DMH psychopharmacologic treatment appears to be of the highest caliber. But there is some cause for concern.

Percentage of distinct medications prescribed to a child in a given month



- 1 medication
- 2 medications
- 3 medications
- 4 or more medications

In a typical month, an average of 372 children seen in non-Juvenile Justice Mental Health programs have prescriptions filled through PATS. Among these, about 202 are on a single medication, 123 are on two, 40 are on three, and 7 are on four or more medications at the same time. The chart on the left depicts these numbers in percentages.

For the roughly 13% of kids on 3 or more medications, we must make every effort to document the extraordinary reasons for such regimens, and our efforts to mitigate the risks inherent in the practice.

To access previous bulletins, go to the DMH Pharmacy webpage: http://dmh.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/dmh/clinical_tools/clinical_pharmacy

