Increasing Abuse of Gabapentin and Pregabalin as Reported to US Poison Centers 2006 through 2014

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Abstract

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Rising abuse of prescription opioids has been a concern in the United States for over a decade, prompting numerous interventions such as state prescription monitoring plans, closing of “pill mills” in Florida, increased regulatory efforts by the FDA, and numerous guidance documents on appropriate opioid prescribing. As opioids become more difficult to obtain, abuse of other drugs may increase.1 Gabapentin was first approved by the FDA in 1993 and pregabalin in late 2004.2 Like opioids, both gabapentin and pregabalin can produce euphoria. The aim of this analysis was to quantify and characterize the trends in rates of abuse of gabapentin and pregabalin as reported to poison centers in the United States. Exposures classified as intentional abuse from 2006-2014 were examined. In addition, fatalities were examined to determine the frequency with which these drugs were used alone.4,13

Methods

• Data from NPDS from January 2006 through December 2014 were queried for gabapentin and pregabalin product codes
• The total number of cases of intentional abuse exposures to gabapentin or pregabalin was computed and divided by the estimated population of the US (scaled per 100,000 population)
• A Poisson regression model was used to determine the trend in the intentional abuse population-based rates per quarter
• The percent of total fatalities that were multi-substance exposures was determined for gabapentin and pregabalin

Results

Pregabalin Intentional Abuse Rates per 100,000 Population

Demographics of NPDS Intentional Abuse Exposures to Gabapentin or Pregabalin 2006-2014 (n=4,152)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>208</td>
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Discussion

Continued monitoring and increased awareness of rising abuse rates for gabapentin and pregabalin is warranted.

References Cited


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None

Conflict of Interest

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