

SAND abstract No. 81 from the BEACH program 2004–05

Subject: Prevalence and indications for gabapentin use by patients attending general practice

Organisations supporting this study: Pfizer Australia Pty Ltd

Issues: The rate of gabapentin use in general practice patients; indications for gabapentin use; clinician initiating treatment with gabapentin; use of private prescriptions for gabapentin.

Sample: 3,095 respondents from 105 GPs; data collection period: 22/02/2005–28/03/2005.

Method: Detailed in the paper entitled 'SAND Method 2004–05' on this website:
<http://www.fmrc.org.au/publications/SAND_abstracts.htm>.

Summary of results

The age-sex distribution of respondents was similar to the distribution for all BEACH encounters, with the majority of patients (56.7%) being female. Patients aged 45–64 years accounted for 29.3% of the sample.

The proportion of respondents who were using gabapentin was small, GPs indicating that only 18 of 3,095 patients (0.6%) were currently taking gabapentin. The rates of gabapentin use did not differ between the sexes, being 0.5% among males and 0.7% among females.

Further details from patients on gabapentin were only provided for 6 of the 18 patients.

Epilepsy was being managed with gabapentin for two of the six patients and neuropathic pain for five of the six patients (one patient had both conditions). One of the patients with epilepsy had their gabapentin treatment initiated by a neurologist, and the other by a pain specialist. The medications taken prior to gabapentin included carbamazepine (Tegretol) and sodium valproate (Epilim). Gabapentin was not prescribed as first line treatment for either patient with epilepsy. Data on whether the prescription was private was available for one of the two patients with epilepsy. This patient was not given gabapentin on a private prescription.

Among the five patients with neuropathic pain, data on who initiated the gabapentin therapy were available for four patients; gabapentin treatment was initiated by a neurologist for one patient, by a pain specialist for two patients and by a GP for one patient. Medications taken prior to gabapentin included carbamazepine (Tegretol), amitriptyline (Endep), doxylamine and sodium valproate (Epilim). Gabapentin was prescribed as first line treatment for one patient with neuropathic pain, by the neurologist. Data on whether the prescription was private was available for four of the five patients with neuropathic pain. Only one of the four prescriptions for gabapentin was a private prescription.

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