

Haematological Monitoring in Clozapine Use: Blood Best Sampled in the Afternoon?

Dr Adedoyin Ade-Dosumu^{1*} and Professor Henry O'Connell^{1,2}

¹Laois/Offaly Mental Health Services, St Fintan's Hospital, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, Ireland. and ²University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland
*Presenting author.

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Aims. Clozapine is an atypical antipsychotic used in the management of Treatment-Resistant Schizophrenia (TRS). Despite its efficacy, Clozapine is associated with rare but clinically important haematological side effects of neutropenia and agranulocytosis, thus warranting regular monitoring of full blood count (FBC) white blood count (WBC) and neutrophil count (NC).

Clozaril Patient Monitoring service (CPMS) supervises the prescribing of Clozapine and haematological testing for patients. Amber and Red alerts are issued by the CPMS when WBC and NC values fall below specified levels, Clozapine treatment is either suspended or discontinued completely.

Methods. We present a case of 35-year-old Caucasian lady with a history of schizophrenia who was maintained on Clozapine treatment for 10 years and whose Clozapine was necessarily stopped because of red alerts. This led to a significant deterioration in her mental state and level of functioning necessitating a prolonged hospital admission.

Results.

- Detailed retrospective review of this patient's CPMS results over a 2-year period identified consistently higher levels of WBC and NC, when the blood tests were conducted in the afternoon compared to mornings.
- Literature review supported the phenomenon of a diurnal variation of WBC and NC levels in a proportion of patients prescribed Clozapine.
- With clear knowledge of this patient's diurnal trends in WBC and NC count, it was possible to liaise with CPMS and restart her Clozapine treatment, leading to a significant improvement in her mental state and level of functioning.

Conclusion.

- We recommend that clinicians consider this phenomenon of diurnal variation in blood parameters in patients with frequent amber and red alert results who are at risk of having their Clozapine medication discontinued.
- Close collaboration with CPMS and haematological advice may lead to a more nuanced approach to blood sampling, whereby afternoon samples are used in certain at-risk patients.

The Prevalence of OCD Like Symptoms Among UAE Residents During COVID-19 Pandemic

Dr Hamid Alhaj^{1,2*}, Miss Amena Ali¹, Mr Hamid Askari¹, Miss Hend Ibrahim¹, Miss Leena Mohamed Ali¹, Miss Leen Kassasand¹ and Miss Noura Al Nasere¹

¹University of Sharjah, Sharjah, UAE and ²University Hospital Sharjah, Sharjah, UAE

*Presenting author.

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Aims. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a psychiatric disorder characterised by repetitive, undesirable thoughts or acts. With the pandemic being on the rise, public health authorities have urged people to take proper health measures, specifically around hand washing and social distancing. It is hypothesised

that such sudden change would cause excessive hygiene habits in people predisposed to OCD. Our study aimed to measure how COVID-19 pandemic affected the prevalence of OCD-like symptoms among the UAE population. Furthermore, we explored the correlation between these symptoms and demographic factors.

Methods. This was a quantitative cross-sectional study that used an online survey platform to collect responses from male and female adult UAE residents (aged between 18 and 60 years). The self-administered questionnaire included Yale-Brown Obsessive compulsive scale (YBOCS) to test the severity of obsessions and compulsions, in addition to demographic questions. People with a previous diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive disorder were excluded. Data were analysed using SPSS 23. A bivariate analysis to examine the correlation between the severity of the reported symptoms and sociodemographic characteristics, age, and ethnicity was conducted. A p-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results. A total of 343 questionnaires were completed and used for analysis; 244 of which were females and 99 were males. 63.5% of females had no symptoms of OCD, 24.6% had mild symptoms, 9% had moderate symptoms, 2.5% had severe symptoms, and 0.4% had extreme OCD symptoms. In males, 75.8% had no OCD symptoms, 18.2% had mild OCD, 6.1% had moderate OCD, and 0% had severe or extreme OCD. A significant correlation was found between the Emirate of residence and the severity of OCD-like-symptoms ($P = 0.042$). The most significant scores of OCD symptoms were in Sharjah, with 10 people out of 108 displaying moderate to extreme symptoms, Abu Dhabi with 9 out of 115 and Fujairah with 7 out of 56. Level of education, occupation and age had no significant role in the exhibition of the symptoms.

Conclusion. To our knowledge this is the first study to investigate the prevalence of OCD-like symptoms within the UAE residents during COVID-19 pandemic. The symptoms of potential clinical significance of OCD are high, especially in females compared to the global prevalence studies prior to COVID-19, although a within-subject comparison is not possible. Further research is warranted to investigate the long-term effect of COVID-19 on OCD-like and other neuropsychiatric symptoms and elucidate possible mechanisms.

Evaluation of a Drama-Based Experiential Learning Group Programme for Multidisciplinary Staff and People With Lived Experience in Psychiatry

Dr Rupal Dave^{1,2*}, Dr Thomas Walker¹, Dr Hugh Grant-Peterkin¹, Dr Robert Fisher¹ and Professor Frank Rohricht¹

¹East London NHS Foundation Trust, London, United Kingdom and ²North East London NHS Foundation Trust, London, United Kingdom

*Presenting author.

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Aims. Experiential learning, such as simulation-based training, is widely used in health education. Dramatic self-expression adds another layer through enacted perspective taking, and embodied self-exploration of interaction with others, to foster situated learning. We describe the evaluation of an innovative drama-based experiential learning project involving collaboration between multidisciplinary mental healthcare staff and people with lived experience of mental illness. The programme was facilitated at East London NHS Foundation Trust by a theatre company