Flemish opioid prescribing trends in primary care

Haio: BERTHELS David , KUL
Promotor: MATHEI Cathy , KUL
Praktijkopleider: BEYEN Anne , BOELANDERS Jean , JACOBS Hans , MARTENS Frank

Context: Around the world there has been a dramatic increase in the use of prescription opioids. At the forefront we currently find the United States, which is undergoing a crippling opioid epidemic. Disconcerting is the similar trend observed in certain European countries.

Onderzoeksvraag: What are the trends in opioid prescribing in Flemish Primary Care.

Methode: We obtained the prevalence of opioid prescriptions in the Flemish Primary Care between January 2005 and December 2015 using data from the Intego database. The proportion of patients per year receiving at least one opioid prescription, at least three opioid prescriptions and at least one tramadol or fentanyl prescription were calculated for different subgroups.

Resultaten: The yearly prevalence of opioid prescriptions significantly increased from 4.87% in 2005 to 6.54% in 2015 (chi-square p

Conclusie: The prescription of opioids in Flanders has consistently increased over the last years. The growth is clearly driven by the non-cancer population. Notable is the increase in tramadol en fentanyl prescriptions which is significantly higher than that of opioids in general. Additionaly it is clear that patients at increased risk for opioid misuse or abuse are more inclined to receive opioid prescriptions. Opioid management therefore needs to be given the proper attention by healthcare providers and health authorities.