Impact of negative media publicity on attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder medication in Taiwan.

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Abstract

PURPOSE:
This study explores trends in attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medications in Taiwan from 2000 to 2011 and whether negative media coverage of Ritalin in January 2010 impacted ADHD prescriptions throughout the country.

METHOD:
Patients throughout Taiwan who had been newly diagnosed with ADHD (n = 145,269) between January 2000 and December 2011 were selected from Taiwan's National Health Insurance database as subjects for this study. We analyzed monthly and yearly data on person-days of treatment with immediate-release methylphenidate (IR-MPH), osmotic controlled-release formulation of methylphenidate (OROS-MPH), and atomoxetine (ATX) using linear models of curve estimation and the time series expert modeler.

RESULTS:
Of our sample, 57.8%, 28.9%, and 4.3% had been prescribed one or more doses of IR-MPH, OROS-MPH, or ATX, respectively. The annual person-days of IR-MPH use increased regularly from 2000 to 2009, dropped abruptly in 2010, and then increased again the next year. Furthermore, the person-days of OROS-MPH prescriptions did not reach their expected goal in 2010; however, the person-days of ATX prescriptions have increased constantly since entering the market in 2007. Compared with patients newly diagnosed with ADHD in 2009, those newly diagnosed in 2010 were less likely to be treated with medication.

CONCLUSION:
These findings suggest that negative publicity affected the writing of stimulant prescriptions for ADHD patients throughout Taiwan. Media reporting has a vital role in influencing children with ADHD, their parents, and their willingness to accept pharmacotherapy as treatment.