Use of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder medication among older adults in Denmark.

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Abstract

AIM:
Knowledge on the use of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medication among older adults is limited. We hypothesized that ADHD medication is used off-label in adults ≥50 years as part of palliative care in e.g. cancer patients. The aim of this study was to describe the use of ADHD medication among adults ≥50 years in Denmark.

METHODS:
Using the Danish health registries, we identified new users ≥50 years of ADHD medication during 2000-2012. We estimated the annual incidence of ADHD medication use and ADHD diagnoses. We described new users of ADHD medication according to co-medication, comorbidities and assessed the one-year cumulative mortality rate. A post-hoc analysis allowed us to include new users until 2015.

RESULTS:
We identified 6,690 new users of ADHD medication from 2000-2012. From 2000-2015 we observed an increase in the incidence of ADHD medication use going from 12.5 to 30.3 per 100,000 person-years. However, the incidence rate decreased from 2010-2015. Throughout the study period, the incidence rate of ADHD diagnoses was low (overall prevalence among new users ≤2%). Opioids were the most frequent comedication used (used by 54%), while cancer was the most frequent diagnosis preceding treatment (prevalence of 52%). The one-year cumulative mortality was 50%, primarily driven by patients with a preceding cancer diagnosis.

CONCLUSION:
There was an increase in the incidence of ADHD medication use in adults ≥50 years from 2000-2010 and a decreasing incidence from 2010-2015. Our results suggest that ADHD medication is used off-label in older adults as part of palliative care.