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PATIENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF ANTICHOLINERGIC DRUGS IN THEIR TREATMENT: FINDINGS FROM AN OUTPATIENT CLINIC IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

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Objectives: To determine how informed psychiatric outpatients are about the role of anticholinergic drugs in their treatment.

Methods: Using a clinician-administered questionnaire designed by the authors; socio-demographic data and views about the role of Benzhexol in their treatments were obtained from all patients whose case records showed that they were currently prescribed Benzhexol.

Results: 98 patients met inclusion criteria, mostly males (n=54; 55.1%). The respondents were predominantly in the age range 25 - 44years (n=67; 68.4%) and single (n=52; 53%). Two-thirds had no more than secondary education. Though more than half of respondents reported having being on their current combination of drugs for more than 1 year, 34% could not give the names of any of their medications. A third reported not knowing the role of Benzhexol in their treatment and of those who claimed to know, 64% (n=42) gave responses that reflected no understanding. Majority (n=31; 74%) of such responses were adjudged to have potentially deleterious implications on their health and outcome. There was no statistically significant association between educational status and knowledge of the role of Benzhexol in patients' treatment. Only 18% reported ever being educated about the role of Benzhexol in their treatment.

Conclusion: The study provides evidence that majority of the patients may not be well informed about important aspects of their treatment and that health workers may have neglected to educate them. It further calls for an urgent need to improve the patient-information aspects of service delivery in our clinics.