Utilisation and expenditure of lipid lowering drugs in Finland, Ireland and Sweden - effect of generic substitution

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During recent years many countries have tried to contain drug costs by implementing generic substitution (GS). Generic substitution is operational in Finland and in Sweden but not in Ireland.

Sales of lipid lowering drugs, especially statins, are increasing rapidly in Europe. The most widely prescribed statins are simvastatin, pravastatin and atorvastatin. (Walley et al 2005).

To compare the utilisation and expenditure of lipid lowering drugs (ATC code C10) in Finland, Ireland and Sweden and to assess the possible effects of generic substitution.

Materials and methods

Data source

Wholesales to pharmacies

Drugs reimbursed under the GMS Scheme (all lipid lowering drugs are reimbursable)

Drugs reimbursed by the public health insurance (all lipid lowering drugs are reimbursable)

Coverage

Total population (outpatients)

Patients with low income and aged over 70 (30% of the population, 65% of the total drug consumption)

Total population (outpatients)

Results

Consumption and cost (€DDD) of lipid lowering drugs in 2004 (DU90%)

Cost (€DDD) of simvastatin and atorvastatin in Finland, Ireland and Sweden 2001-2005.

Conclusions

In all countries statins accounted majority of the consumption (over 97%).

Atorvastatin, simvastatin and pravastatin are most commonly used lipid lowering drugs in all countries, but their position varies.

In Sweden, adoption of new statins has been slow, but in Finland and in Ireland they have high market shares.

Expenditure of individual statins varies between countries.

In each country the most commonly used statin has also the lowest cost/DDD.

Generic substitution explains the lower expenditure and probably at least partly the popularity of simvastatin in Sweden and in Finland compared to Ireland.

Expenditure of pravastatin has, however, remained high in all countries.

References


Data from years 2001-2005.

Utilisation measured in Defined Daily Doses (DDD) and DDD/1,000 inhabitants/day.

Expenditure (€) calculated using pharmacy retail prices with VAT.

Utilisation pattern assessed by the DU90% methodology (Drug utilisation accounting for 90% of total utilisation) (Bergman & al 1998).

Expenditure of pravastatin has, however, remained high in all countries.

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References
