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THE USE OF DRUGS FOR MOOD DISORDERS IN ITALY: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

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Background: Some community surveys in Italy have shown that a proportion of subjects without lifetime psychiatric diagnosis (anxiety/depression) used antidepressants. The prescription of AD in bipolar depression appears to be another largely underestimated problem in the clinical practice and is difficult to recognise by means of traditional epidemiological methods (lay interview and structured diagnostic tools).

Objectives: The purpose is to use defined and validated international semi-structured interview as diagnostic instrument administered by expert clinicians to evaluate appropriateness and amount of over and under prescription of psychotropic drugs in different Italian community areas. The focus is on general antidepressant use and use in subjects with bipolar disorder and in subsyndromal depression.

Methods: Study design: Community survey. Study population: sample randomly drawn, after stratification by sex and age, from the adult population of Municipal records in 6 Italian Regions: about 4000 persons will be interviewed. Tools: Questionnaire on psychotropic drugs consumption, prescription, health services utilisation; diagnostic Structured Clinical Interview np version; Mood Disorders Questionnaire; Short Form Health Survey. Ethical aspects: a signed informed consent for each candidate. The study was approved by the ethical committee of the Italian National Health Institute.

Expected results: The study aims to identify the frequency of over and under prescription of psychotropic drugs in different Italian regions and the determinants of prescription related to physicians, patients, comorbidity and symptoms and to establish the basis for a cohort prospective study to assess the future changes.