

The effect of COVID-19 on physical health monitoring in patients prescribed antipsychotic depot medication in a community mental health team

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Background

- People with schizophrenia have a shorter life expectancy by 10-25 years with this excess mortality largely due to cardiovascular disease.¹
- The physical health monitoring of patients receiving long-term antipsychotic medication is vital to detect and treat abnormalities contributing to disease.
- The pandemic has markedly impacted on healthcare resources and the ability to perform physical health monitoring.

Aims

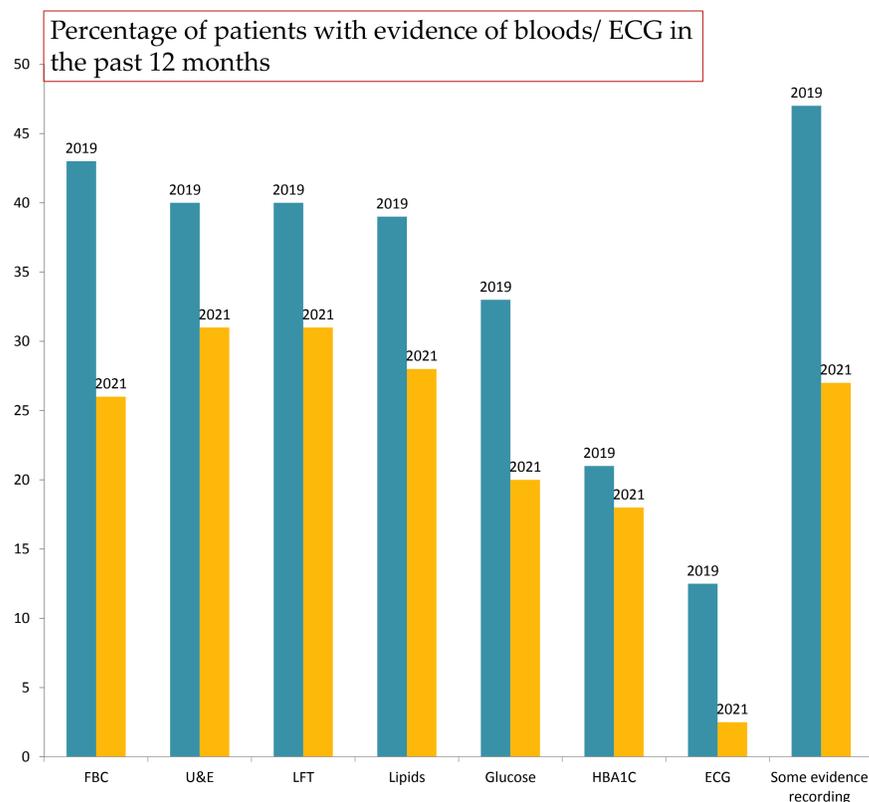
- Our aims were twofold: to measure compliance rates of physical health monitoring of patients on depot antipsychotics against gold standard NICE and Maudsley guidelines and to determine if there has been a change in the frequency of monitoring since the outbreak of the pandemic

Methods

- A retrospective chart review was carried out on all patients receiving depot antipsychotic medication in October 2019.
- Documentation of the following results for the preceding 12 months were recorded: FBC, U&Es, LFTs, lipids, HbA1c and evidence of ECG.
- A re-audit was conducted in March 2021, one year after the WHO declared the global pandemic.

Results

- 72 patient charts were examined in 2019 and 80 patient charts in 2021.
- There was a decrease in the recording of FBC, U&E, LFTs, Lipid profiles, HBA1C, fasting bloods glucose and annual ECG recording.
- In 2019 47% of patient charts had evidence of some physical health monitoring in the preceding year compared with 27% in 2021.



Conclusion

- Our results demonstrate a decline in physical health monitoring from 2019 to 2021. This timeframe represents the emergence of the global pandemic.
- Infection control measures have reduced accessibility for patients to all aspects of healthcare including blood testing and ECG monitoring. This may impact the detection of physical health abnormalities and the opportunity for preventative management.
- The pandemic has created another barrier for patients with severe mental illness to access healthcare which may contribute to further health disparities in an already disadvantaged group.
- Our results indicate a need for improved physical health monitoring with a new sense of urgency in the COVID-19 era.

References

Hjorthoj *et al*, 2017; The Lancet Psychiatry.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(17\)30078-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(17)30078-0)

This study has not received any financial sponsorship
Ethical approval was not sought
Consent to publish this audit granted by the clinical director
This data has not been submitted elsewhere



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