4.7 Antipsychotic medicines dispensing 17 years and under

Context
This data item examines dispensing rates of antipsychotic medicines for people aged 17 years and under. These data are sourced from the PBS and relate to the number of prescriptions dispensed per 100,000 people.

In Australia, antipsychotic medicines are primarily used to treat psychotic disorders, including schizophrenia, and the psychotic symptoms of mood disorders. They are used to reduce or sometimes eliminate the distressing and disabling symptoms of psychosis, such as paranoia, confused thinking, delusions and hallucinations. This is the common use of antipsychotic medicines for adolescents.

In children and some adolescents, antipsychotic medicines are also used to treat a range of behavioural disturbances related to developmental and behavioural conditions, including autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and conduct disorder.

Antipsychotic medicine is one component of treating mental health conditions but is rarely considered sufficient on its own. Effective treatment for psychosis and behavioural disorders usually includes ongoing clinical support in the community; psychological therapies including family therapy; education about symptoms and how to deal with them; accommodation, employment and educational support.
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Magnitude of variation

In 2013–14, there were 104,697 PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines, representing 2,070 prescriptions per 100,000 people aged 17 years and under (the Australian rate).

The number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines across 317* local areas (SA3s) ranged from 306 to 6,895 per 100,000 people aged 17 years and under. The number of prescriptions was 22.5 times higher in the area with the highest rate compared to the area with the lowest rate. The average number of prescriptions dispensed varied across states and territories, from 716 per 100,000 people aged 17 years and under in the Northern Territory, to 2,544 in Queensland.

After excluding the highest and lowest results, the antipsychotic medicine prescription rate across the 298 remaining local areas was 7.1 times higher in one local area compared to another.

Dispensing rates were similar in major cities and in regional areas, and lowest in remote communities. Dispensing rates for those 17 years and under had little association with socioeconomic groupings.

Interpretation

Potential reasons for the variation include differences in:

- prescribing practices across different states and territories and potentially between primary health providers and specialists
- access to psychosocial interventions
- the incidence and prevalence of psychosis related to illicit drug use
- practitioner, consumer and family willingness to accept medication assistance
- health system factors, including availability of mental health services and access to psychiatric and psychological services
- location of youth correction centres in areas of higher dispensing
- private prescriptions, which are not included in this data.

It is also important to note that the dispensing of antipsychotic medicines in remote areas by some Aboriginal Health Services is not captured in the PBS.

To explore this variation, further analysis could focus on:

- prescription rates based on practitioner type. This could help determine the extent of variations between primary and specialist care providers, taking into account the severity of the disease or disorder.

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*There are 333 SA3s. For this item, data were suppressed for 16 SA3s. This is because of confidentiality requirements given the small numbers of prescriptions dispensed in these areas.
Figure 87: Number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines per 100,000 people aged 17 years and under, age standardised, by local area, 2013–14

Notes:
Rates are standardised based on the age structure of the Australian population in 2001.
State/territory and national rates are based on the total number of prescriptions and people in the geographic area.
The term local area refers to an ABS standard geographic region known as a Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3).
PBS prescriptions include all medicines dispensed under the PBS or RPBS, including medicines that do not receive a Commonwealth subsidy. They exclude a large proportion of public hospital drug usage, direct supply to remote Aboriginal Health Services, over-the-counter purchases and private prescriptions.
SA3 analysis excludes approximately 160 prescriptions from GPO postcodes 2001, 2124, 3001, 4001, 5001, 6843 but these data are included in state/territory and national level analysis.

For more technical information please refer to the Technical Supplement.

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Figure 88: Number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines per 100,000 people aged 17 years and under, age standardised, by local area, 2013–14

The number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines across 317 local areas (SA3s) ranged from 306 to 6,895 per 100,000 people aged 17 years and under. The number of prescriptions was **22.5 times higher** in the area with the highest rate compared to the area with the lowest rate.

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Figure 89: Number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines per 100,000 people aged 17 years and under, age standardised, by local area, state and territory, 2013–14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>Vic</th>
<th>Qld</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>Tas</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest rate</td>
<td>6,895</td>
<td>4,205</td>
<td>5,282</td>
<td>4,136</td>
<td>3,075</td>
<td>2,729</td>
<td>1,611</td>
<td>2,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/territory</td>
<td>2,448</td>
<td>1,774</td>
<td>2,544</td>
<td>1,916</td>
<td>1,102</td>
<td>1,632</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>1,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest rate</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. prescriptions</td>
<td>39,447</td>
<td>21,492</td>
<td>27,366</td>
<td>6,742</td>
<td>6,110</td>
<td>1,877</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>1,221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
Rates are standardised based on the age structure of the Australian population in 2001.
State/territory and national rates are based on the total number of prescriptions and people in the geographic area.

Sources:

For this item, local area refers to an ABS standard geographic region known as a Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3).

The size of each circle represents the number of prescriptions dispensed in each local area.

Notes:
Rates are standardised based on the age structure of the Australian population in 2001.
State/territory and national rates are based on the total number of prescriptions and people in the geographic area.

Sources:
**Figure 90: Number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines per 100,000 people aged 17 years and under, age standardised, by local area, remoteness and socioeconomic status (SES), 2013–14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remoteness</th>
<th>Major cities</th>
<th>Inner regional</th>
<th>Outer regional</th>
<th>Remote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SES quintiles</td>
<td>1 Low SES</td>
<td>2 Low SES</td>
<td>3 Low SES</td>
<td>1 Low SES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 High SES</td>
<td>3 High SES</td>
<td>4 Higher SES</td>
<td>2 High SES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4+ Higher SES</td>
<td>3+ Higher SES</td>
<td>1+ Higher SES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average rate</td>
<td>2,183</td>
<td>1,386</td>
<td>3,056</td>
<td>2,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,056</td>
<td>2,019</td>
<td>2,412</td>
<td>1,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,108</td>
<td>958</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Rates are standardised based on the age structure of the Australian population in 2001.
- The national rate is based on the total number of prescriptions and people in Australia.
- Average rates are based on the total number of prescriptions and people in the local areas within each group.


For this item, **local area** refers to an ABS standard geographic region known as a **Statistical Area Level 3** (SA3).

The size of each circle represents the number of prescriptions dispensed in each local area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>20</th>
<th>500</th>
<th>1,000</th>
<th>1,500</th>
<th>2,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian rate</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
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Resources


