

Study reveals antidepressants most common medication for Australian women

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A new study has revealed the most commonly prescribed medication for Australian women is antidepressants. The study, by researchers from Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH).

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and Medicare data were linked to survey data to examine claims and costs of medications and other health care resources.

University of Newcastle study co-director and lead author of the Use and costs of medications and other health care resources report, Professor Julie Byles, said the research indicated the prevalence of antidepressant use increased with age.

"Eight percent of younger women and 14 percent of mid-age women used antidepressants during the surveyed period," Professor Byles said.

"This figure jumps to 18 percent in older women."

"However, the use of antidepressants is not a clear indicator of the extent of depression among women. For example, among young women who reported a diagnosis of depression, 40 percent had not used prescribed antidepressant medication."

Other significant findings from the research include:

- Older women, in particular, mentioned the impact of costs of medication on their ability to manage their incomes
- There were few differences in patterns of claims between women living in urban, rural and remote areas
- There was evidence that women who made claims for common medications had a lower socio-economic status.

The release of the report coincides with the Australian Government's announcement of a further \$5 million to continue the longitudinal study for the next three and a half years. ALSWH has been funded by the Department of Health and Ageing since it commenced in 1996.

UQ ALSWH Director, Professor Annette Dobson, said the research provided an evidence-base to Government to assist health policy and programs to keep pace with the evolving needs of Australian women.

"The ongoing support of the Australian Government means the study's findings can continue to provide an invaluable insight into the biological, psychosocial and environmental factors affecting women across the course of life," Professor Dobson said.

The ALSWH is a 20 year project involving three cohorts spanning three generations. More than 40,000 women participate in the study. Researchers based in Newcastle work in collaboration with the Hunter Medical Research Institute. Use and costs of medications and other health care resources are available at www.alswh.org.au .

Provided by UQ

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