

ABSTRACT

**Background** | Antidepressant medications are often used as first line treatment for patients with major depressive disorder (MDD). Although prescribing guidelines concerning the medication type and specific dosage have been established, treatment decisions made in real-world practice are largely made based on clinicians’ judgment.<sup>1-2</sup> To date, few studies have evaluated the prescribing practices in clinical practice to determine if and how they differ from established or recommended treatment guidelines.

**Objective** | To evaluate clinician prescribing practices, including the most commonly prescribed antidepressants and dosages, for treatment of MDD among patients in a managed healthcare organization.

**Methods** | Individuals aged 19-90 years, with continuous medical and pharmacy coverage and a claim for MDD (ICD-9 codes: 296.2, 296.3, 311) in 2013 were identified. For those patients, antidepressant medication prescriptions filled in 2013 were evaluated to determine the most commonly prescribed antidepressant medications and dosing regimens. For each antidepressant medication, the prescription frequency and percent of patients prescribed a particular medication were calculated. The most common dosage and percent of patients receiving that dose were also calculated.

**Results** | Of the 68,394 patients who met inclusion criteria, 80% (54,107) were prescribed an antidepressant. The average age of the population treated with an antidepressant was 67 years. Treated patients were predominantly female (n=39,816, 74%) with Medicare insurance (n=48,266, 89%). The top 10 most commonly prescribed antidepressant medications were: citalopram (n=11,995, 22%), sertraline (n=10,791, 20%), trazodone (n=9,501, 18%), bupropion (n=8,479, 16%), fluoxetine (n=7,692, 14%), duloxetine (n=6,808, 13%), venlafaxine (n=6,345, 12%), escitalopram (n=6,229, 12%), paroxetine (n=4,706, 9%), and mirtazapine (n=4,323, 8%). The most common daily doses by drug were: 20mg citalopram (44%), 50mg sertraline (31%), 100mg trazodone (28%), 300mg bupropion (42%), 20mg fluoxetine (37%), 60mg duloxetine (51%), 150mg venlafaxine (32%), 20mg escitalopram (45%), 20mg paroxetine(38%), and 15mg mirtazapine (42%).

**Conclusions** | Clinical practice prescribing patterns for antidepressant medications are within the recommended guidelines. Future studies should examine prescribing practices for primary care physicians and psychiatrists.

Prescribing Practices of Antidepressant Medications for Treatment of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) among Insured Members (N=68,394)











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Results

80% of patients with MDD were prescribed an antidepressant (n=54,107 / 68,394)



The mean number of antidepressant prescription fills per person was 3.7







Table 1. Demographics of patients treated with antidepressant for MDD

Measure	
Receiving an antidepressant	54,107
Gender, n (%)	
Female	39,816 (73.59%)
Male	14,288 (26.40%)
Unknown	3 (0.01%)
Type of Insurance	
Commercial	5,416 (10.00%)
Medicare	48,266 (89.21%)
Medicaid	422 (0.78%)
Unknown	3 (0.01%)
Age, mean ± standard error	
Total	67.53 ± 0.05
Commercial	49.91 ± 0.17
Medicare	69.59 ± 0.05
Medicaid	58.59 ± 0.63
Number of antidepressant prescription fills, mean ± standard error	
Total	3.68 ± 0.04
Commercial	3.87 ± 0.03
Medicare	3.65 ± 0.01
Medicaid	4.50 ± 0.10

Figure 1. Most commonly prescribed antidepressants among patients with MDD (n=54,107)

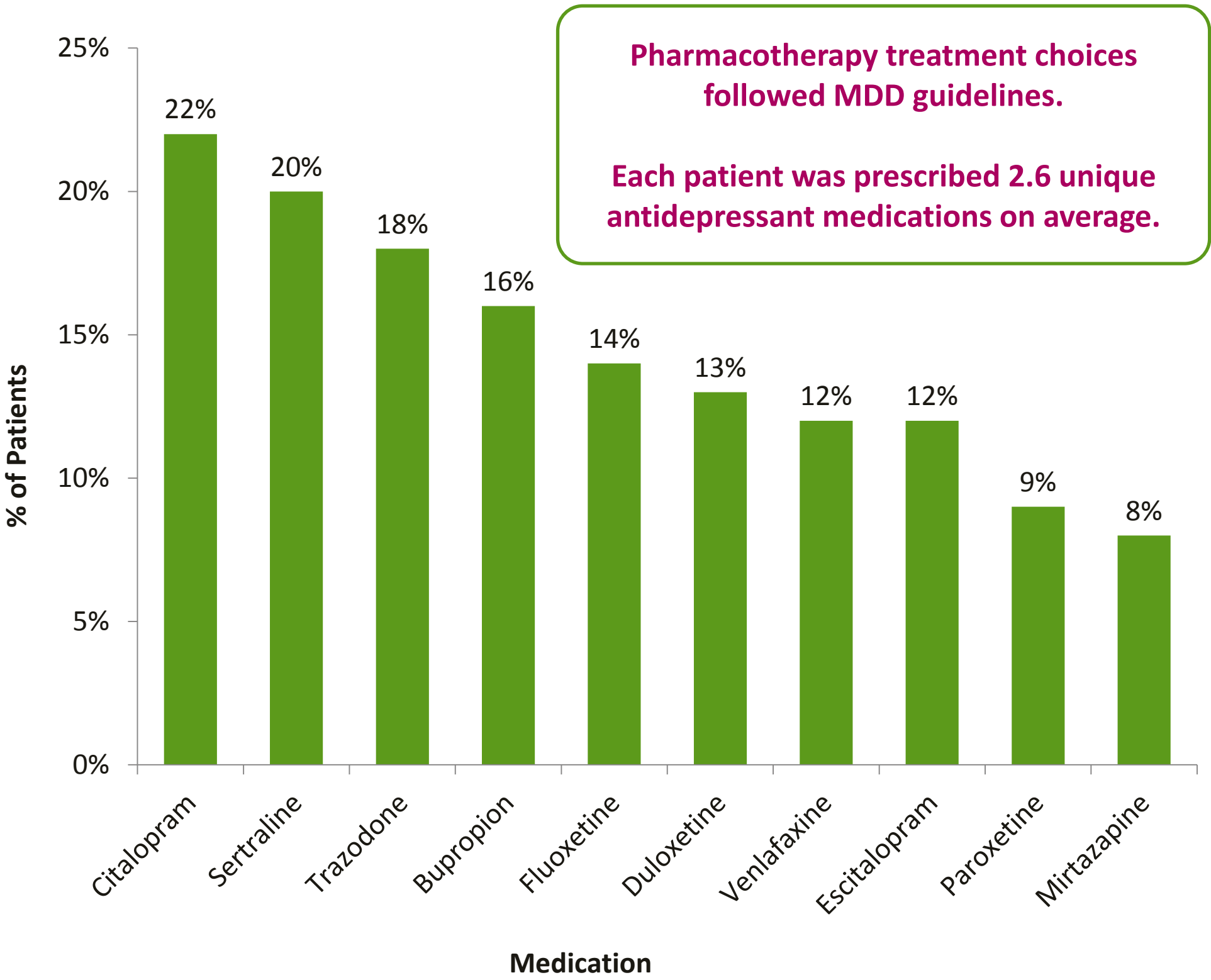


Table 2: Most commonly prescribed daily dose of antidepressant medications

Antidepressant	Most common daily dose	Most common daily dose as % of all doses
Citalopram, n=11,995	20 mg	44%
Sertraline, n=10,791	50 mg	31%
Trazodone, n=9,501	100 mg	28%
Bupropion , n=8,479	300 mg	42%
Fluoxetine, n=7,692	20 mg	37%
Duloxetine, n=6,808	60 mg	51%
Venlafaxine, n=6,345	150 mg	32%
Escitalopram , n=6,229	20 mg	45%
Paroxetine, n=4,706	20 mg	38%
Mirtazapine , n=4,323	15 mg	42%
With the exception of trazodone, antidepressant daily doses fell within recommended treatment guidelines.		

**References**

1. American Psychiatric Association (2010) (eds: Gelenberg, AJ, Freeman, MP, Markowitz, JC, Rosenbaum, JF, Thase, ME, Trivedi, MH, Van Rhoads, RS). Practice Guidelines for the Treatment of Patients with Major Depressive Disorder, 3rd Edition.

2. CMS Medicaid Integrity Program (2013). Education Medicaid Integrity Contractor. Antidepressant Medications: US Food and Drug Administration-Approved Indications and Dosages for Use in Adults.