



# Patient knowledge about prescribed medication for comorbidities in adolescent patients in eating disorder service.

The aim of this pilot study was to inform the team about how much the young people in the eating disorders service understand about the medication they are taking. We hypothesized that they might not be well informed, and that compliance and effectiveness of medication could be improved with more knowledge. In the UK the most accessible resource is found at the website of a mental health charitable organisation YoungMinds.<sup>1</sup>

## Background:

We wished to understand what young people could recall about their medication as opposed to their parents or carers. Knowledge young people have about their medication could inform practitioners whether we need to change information giving practices. Higher levels of satisfaction with medicines information are associated with higher levels of reported adherence, and lower levels of satisfaction are associated with stronger concerns about the potential adverse effects of medicines. We decided to measure what the young person knew rather than their satisfaction with the received information due to the ego-syntonic nature of eating disorders and ambivalence about treatment. Therefore we chose not to use the Satisfaction with Information about Medicines Scale (SIMS)<sup>2</sup> which is not validated for children and is a longer questionnaire.

## Methods:

A questionnaire (six brief questions) filled in by young people in person when attending appointments.

All participants were patients within the Eating Disorders CAMHS Oxfordshire. The answers were collected over the period of January to March 2023.

## The content of the questionnaire:

1. Name of the medication
2. Why are you taking the medication (what is it to help with?)
3. How much are you taking?
4. How often (once or more per day, morning or evening)?
5. How does this medication help you?
6. What are the possible side effects of this medication that you know of?

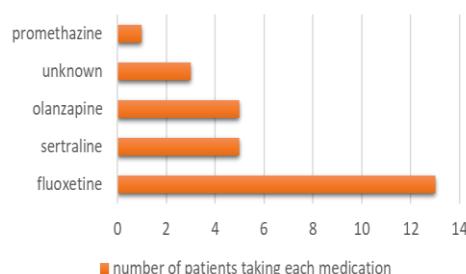
What young people told us about how the medication helps them:

*reduces intrusive thoughts*  
*I became calmer, especially when having fear foods or eating in public. I am happier.*  
*helps to feel less low*  
*it makes emotions less heightened, as well as helping me to eat.*  
*eases some anxieties and obsessive thoughts*

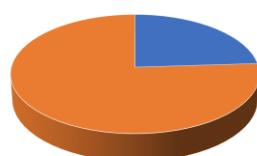
## Results:

21 questionnaires were completed by young people aged 12 to 17 years. 24% of respondents were not able to comment about possible side effects of the medication they were taking. All but three patients knew the name of their medication and why this was prescribed and two of the three who struggled were younger patients.

number of patients taking each medication



76% of patients knew some potential side effects of the medication



## Conclusions:

Most young people knew why their medication was prescribed and their knowledge about that medication was mostly correct. However, there were differences between clinician rationale for prescribing and perceived symptom improvement. This could be an area of opportunity for improvement of care. Research shows that when considering medication in mental health, young people highlighted perceived lack of involvement in decision-making as being particularly detrimental to their well-being.<sup>3</sup> Explicit reminders about target symptoms and offering medication leaflets again in follow up appointments might support young people better in understanding their medication. While researching literature and current support websites for this pilot study we noted that there is limited information about medicines used in mental health disorders that is written for teenagers. This is something that RCPsych could lead on and link with organisations that do have this information, like YoungMinds.

## References:

1. <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/medications> last accessed October 2023
2. Horne R, Hankins M, Jenkins R. The Satisfaction with Information about Medicines Scale (SIMS): a new measurement tool for audit and research. *Qual Health Care*. 2001 Sep;10(3):135-40
3. Sara S. McMillan, Bethany Wilson, Helen Stapleton & Amanda J. Wheeler (2022) Young people's experiences with mental health medication: A narrative review of the qualitative literature, *Journal of Mental Health*, 31:2, 281-295