

## ABSTRACT

This report examines psychotropic drug prescribing in general practice.

The first section deals with national prescribing trends. The annual increase in psychotropic drug prescribing is discussed with particular reference to the part that four drugs have played in these increases. Two of these drugs are prescribed as hypnotics; and two are prescribed for the treatment of anxiety. The pressures and indications for prescribing these drugs are considered and certain concepts about prescribing influences are developed.

The second section contains an analysis of findings from a retrospective survey of psychotropic drug prescribing by a group of Midland general practitioners during the year 1 May, 1967 to 30 April, 1968. The psychotropic drug prescribing patterns and habits of these doctors are reported, discussed and compared with an analysis of prescriptions dispensed in the survey city during February, 1968. The age and sex of patients for whom psychotropic drugs were prescribed during the year are reported on, and a relationship between the taking of particular drugs of dependence, advancing age, and the sex of the patient, is noted and discussed. The duration of psychotropic drug therapy by the survey general practitioners is reported on and a further relationship between the taking of drugs of dependence, duration of therapy and entry of prescription details by ancillary staff is noted. Long-term drug taking and indirect methods of obtaining repeat prescriptions are discussed. Finally, the survey general practitioners' indications for psychotropic drug therapy are discussed. In particular the high incidence of "symptom" diagnosis and treatment is noted and there are comments on the problems of management of psychiatric disorders with particular reference to anxiety and depressive disorders. Some suggestions are made for future research topics and the need to improve undergraduate and postgraduate education in psychiatry and therapeutics is emphasized.

In the third section some of the influences which affect prescribing in general practice are examined. Some of the studies carried out on influences upon prescribing are reviewed and the sources and influence of therapeutic knowledge are examined and certain hypotheses are developed.

The final section takes an overview of the facts and opinions reported in the first three sections; ideas about sales promotion and the rôle of education are further developed. The report concludes by asking pertinent questions about prescribing in general practice and stresses the need for any future research to include sociological studies.