

Letter-to-Editor

Deviations of prescriptions from standard guidelines

Sir,

We read with interest the article by Shetty *et al*¹ titled 'Evaluation of prescriptions from tertiary care hospitals across India for deviations from treatment guidelines & their potential consequences,' published in the February 2024 issue of the Indian Journal of Medical Research.

We congratulate the authors on conducting such an extensive study across 13 centres; however, we have a few comments.

The study was conducted at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) - Rational Use of Medicines Centres, where the use of drugs is more likely to be rational. Despite this, clinicians adhered to treatment guidelines in only 55.1 per cent of prescriptions. This issue needs to be addressed.

In a study by Terrier *et al*², clinicians' adherence rates were found to be low, ranging from 16 per cent to 26.4 per cent. Additionally, another study³ from York University previously highlighted the patchy implementation of NICE guidance³.

It would be interesting to study the appropriateness of prescriptions in real-world scenarios, especially for outpatients, where irrational prescribing may be more prevalent.

This underscores the pressing need for Continuing Medical Education (CME) for healthcare personnel, emphasizing repeated training on the rational use of drugs.

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Authors' response

Sir,

We thank the authors of this letter to Editor¹ for their interest in our article. This study was an attempt to evaluate the prescriptions for adherence to standard treatment guidelines, and we found deviations. The setting chosen was all rational use of medicine centers and preferably central and State government and municipal hospital OPDs (outpatient departments). This study design can also be extended to the private sector and IPDs (in-patient departments) patients to understand the entire picture. The major drugs prescribed, and which led to deviations included the proton pump inhibitors in isolation and in combination

with other drugs. The perceived potential consequences of such unacceptable deviation were increased cost and adverse drug effects. The clinicians also provided several recommendations for improving the situation – educational and administrative directives².

Now, the recent curriculum for the Indian Medical Graduate has implemented prescription writing as a skill exercise, which may improvise the situation. Early training in undergraduate days may decrease the deviations in writing prescriptions.

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