Psychotropic medications are used frequently. In 2007, a total of 422.6 million prescriptions were dispensed from Canadian retail pharmacies. Psychotropic medications accounted for 53 million (12.6%), second only to cardiovascular agents (65.7 million). Serious adverse psychotropic medication events do occur and account for medication-related hospital admissions.

Objective
To gain a deeper understanding of incidents involving psychotropic medications and potential systems-based contributing factors.

Methodology
DATA COLLECTION
Data source for medication incident reports:
- ISMP Canada Medication Incident Database
  - Oct 7, 2000 to July 29, 2009
Inclusion Criteria:
- Incidents with an outcome of harm or death involving medications in the following American Hospital Formulary System (AHFS) categories:
  - 28:16.04 Antidepressants
  - 28:16.08 Tranquilizers
  - 28:24.08 Benzodiazepines
  - 28:28 Antimanic agents

DATA ANALYSIS
Qualitative research methods utilized:
- Analysis of the narrative data-fields by two independent analysts
- Identification of common themes and potential contributing factors

Limitations
- Voluntary reporting
- True incidence rates cannot be established
- Not comprehensive
- Follow-up not possible in most cases

Conclusions
Learning from medication incidents is a fundamental step to medication system improvement.

Aggregate analysis of medication incidents involving psychotropic drugs:
- Unique challenges faced by mental health patients and their caregivers
- Potential areas for systems-based improvements

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