

Characteristic of Decision Making Process during Prescribing

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BACKGROUND

The aim of our study was to describe the decision making process by general practitioners who are deciding on a treatment for an individual patient, and to relate the scope and nature of this process to the quality of the decision outcome.

METHODS

This study has involved all general practitioners who have worked at Health Center in Kragujevac during the time of investigation (September-December 2002). While thinking aloud, 53 general practitioners made prescribing decisions for five patients with urinary tract infections or stomach complaints. The resulting 265 transcripts were analysed to determine the scope and nature of the decision processes. Differences in the process were related to case or doctor characteristics: working experience and education.

RESULTS

It was shown that physicians with more years of practice considered less treatments and addi-

tional aspects before prescribing. Doctors with less experience in most of cases considered core aspects, while they who had more experience more often considered contextual and habitual aspects. Education of general practitioners and type of disease, which was considered, had influence on decision making process. The most optimal method of decision making (marked as typ F) most often occurred in physicians with the least experience, while experts predominantly decided in ways which were considered as least acceptable. Optimal method of decision process do not necessary provide optimal therapy, so the least acceptable decision making may not lead to inappropriate treatment.

CONCLUSIONS

The behaviour observed clearly deviates from the prescribing decision standards. Our study suggests the need for obligatory continuing medical education in Serbia and Montenegro.