INTRODUCTION

Psychiatric disorders are gaining importance in today's world which is governed by globalization and competition. The National Institute of Family Welfare in India states that 2-3% of the population is suffering from serious debilitating mental disorders or epilepsy and about 10.4-53% visit general medicine outpatient department (OPD) with mental conditions. The majority of the psychiatric population needs long-term or even life-long therapy with psychotropics. However, these drugs often affect emotion and cognition wherein significant clinical, legal, and psychological issues are being observed [1,2].

In a developing country like India, where almost all psychotropic medications are available, very few studies have been conducted to evaluate the psychotropic drug utilization pattern [3]. The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined drug utilization study as a study of marketing, distribution, prescription, and use of drugs in society [4]. Drug utilization studies provide insight into the trend of drugs used in psychiatric outpatients.

METHODS

This hospital-based prospective observational study was carried out in outpatients of the Psychiatry Department of M. S. Ramaiah Medical Teaching Hospital (MSRMMTH), Bengaluru, Karnataka, India, for a period of 6 months from January 2015 to June 2015. The complete project was done in accordance with the permission granted by MSRMMTHs Ethics Committee. Patients diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder, regardless of sex, and comorbidities were enrolled as per inclusion and exclusion criteria. Patient’s case notes, medication charts, lab reports, previous outpatient and inpatient records, and other relevant documents were reviewed, and details were recorded in a predesigned structured format to analyze the drug utilization pattern. The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Version 20.0 was used to analyze data. The WHO drug use indicators were used for analyzing the prescriptions.
Inclusion criteria
Patients of either gender attending the OPD of psychiatric setting and patients treated with one or more psychopharmacological agents in psychiatric OPD were selected.

Exclusion criteria
Patients treated on an inpatient basis; patients treated with nonpsychopharmacological therapy; patients who were agitated and uncooperative were excluded from the study.

RESULTS
A total of 202 patients satisfied inclusion criteria and a male preponderance (63.86%) was observed in the study population. The majority of patients belonged to the age group of 25-35 years (36.63%). Morbidity pattern showed increased frequency with substance-related disorders (28.71%) followed by schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders (22.77%) and anxiety disorders (18.81%) (Fig. 1). Benzodiazepines (BZDs) (28.96%), antidepressants (18.18%), and atypical antipsychotics (18.18%) were the most common categories of drugs prescribed.

The most frequently prescribed BZDs have been clonazepam (47.89%), diazepam (21.05%), and lorazepam (18.95%). Among the antidepressants, escitalopram (57.4%) and sertraline (12.96%) were the most commonly prescribed drugs. Risperidone accounted for about 42.5% of the prescribed antipsychotics followed by olanzapine (23.33%) and quetiapine (15%). Among the anticonvulsants, topiramate (36.58%) and valproic acid (36.58%) were frequently prescribed. Vitamin and mineral supplements (63.7%) followed by trihexyphenidyl (20.74%) were the most commonly prescribed drugs among other psychotropic drugs (Table 1).

A total of 202 prescriptions containing 686 drugs were analyzed. Polypharmacy was found in 93.56% of the prescriptions with an average of 3.396 drugs/prescription. Polypharmacy was found to be more among the age group 25-35 years (34.39%). Drugs prescribed in their generic name constituted 39.94% while the prescriptions with injectable drugs accounted for 2.04% and 0.01% of the prescription contained psychotropic fixed dose combination (FDC). 27.98% of the psychotropic drugs were prescribed from WHO's 18th List of Essential Medicines (Table 2).

DISCUSSION
Psychotropics remain a mainstay in the treatment of psychiatric illness. Drug utilization studies of psychotropic drugs reflect the present trends in therapeutic decision making. In this study, a total of 202 prescriptions were analyzed, of which, 129 (63.86%) were males and 73 (36.14%) were females which is in concordance with the study conducted by Kumar et al. [11]. The male preponderance in the present study can be attributed to the morbidity pattern observed with substance-related disorders (alcohol dependence syndrome and nicotine dependence syndrome) as the most common psychiatric disorder.

According to present findings, the majority of the patients belonged to 25-35 years age group which was found similar to the study conducted by Sarumathy et al., wherein more than 66% of patients belonged to 21-40 years of age group [12]. Morbidity pattern among psychiatric disorders showed substance-related disorders (28.71%) as the most common psychiatric disorder followed by schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders (22.77%). This is in contrary to the multicentric study conducted by the Indian Psychiatric Society where affective disorders followed by neurotic, stress-related, and somatoform disorders were the most common diagnostic categories [13]. Higher prevalence of substance use disorders in the present study may be probably due to increase help-seeking behavior for the same in the study population.

The drug utilization pattern in the study population showed BZDs (28.96%) as the most commonly prescribed psychotropic drug class followed by antidepressants (18.18%) and antipsychotics (18.18%). In our study, more than half of the psychotic patients received adjunctive BZD, clonazepam (47.89%) being the most common BZD followed by diazepam (21.05%) and lorazepam (18.95%). Similar findings were found in a study carried out by Rode et al., which showed the prescribing frequency of anxiotytics, antidepressants, antipsychotics, anticholinergics, and antimania drugs as 30.04%, 25.46%, 25.37%, 11.54%, and 7.6%, respectively [14].

Prescribing pattern of antipsychotics in our study showed increased usage of atypical antipsychotics (18.8%) compared to typical antipsychotics (2.02%). Risperidone (42.5%) was the most commonly prescribed antipsychotic followed by olanzapine (23.33%). Prescriptions consisting of typical antipsychotics were found to be less, wherein chlorpromazine and haloperidol being the only drugs prescribed (5% each). This is similar to the results from the preliminary
survey on antipsychotic prescribing pattern conducted among Indian Psychiatrists [15]. The most commonly prescribed antidepressant medication according to our study was escitalopram (57.40%) followed by sertraline (12.96%) which was similar to the findings from a multicentric study conducted by the Indian Psychiatry Society [13]. However, among the mood stabilizers, lithium and sodium valproate were commonly prescribed, followed by carbamazepine which is in contrary to study conducted by the Indian Psychiatry Society and in concordance with the study conducted by Trivedi et al. [16]. The WHO guidelines state that the number of antipsychotic drugs per prescription should be within 1.6-1.8/encounter, our study showed 3.09, which is considerably more. In our study, around 60% of the prescriptions consisted of 1-3 drugs and 40% of the prescriptions contained four or more drugs. These findings suggested a rise in the incidence of polypharmacy with high prevalence among 25-35 years age group which is supported by a study conducted by Deshmukh and Ismail [5]. Polypharmacy can lead to poor compliance, drug interactions, adverse drug reactions, under-use of effective treatments and medication errors [17]. The reason for polypharmacy in our study may be attributed to the complexity in presentation in psychiatric illness and the presence of comorbidities. Generic drug usage reduces the overall cost of therapy, but our study revealed a low percentage of generic drug usage (39.94%) compared to brand drug usage (60.06%). The prescriptions containing psychotropic FGs were very minimal (0.01%) which may be due to unavailability of expected FDC in the market. Concerns about the adverse effects and cost-effectiveness of parenteral routes of drug administration are probably the reason for the low utilization of "depot injection" for injection in the study (2.04%). The percentage of drugs prescribed from the WHO Essential Drug List was found to be 27.98, and the primary purpose of WHO Essential Drug List is to promote rational use of medicines considering the three important aspects, i.e., cost, safety, and efficacy. Our study suggests a strong need for creating awareness in the prescribers regarding the usage of generic drugs as they are cost-effective compared to brand drugs.

CONCLUSION

Continuous monitoring of the prescription gives an insight of present trends in prescribing patterns of psychotropic drugs in hospital settings. The drug use pattern from the study largely conforms to the standard recommendations of WHO. The commonly used psychotropic drug in the present study was BZDs. The incidence of polypharmacy should be minimized in psychiatric outpatients as it might result in poor compliance, increased drug interactions, and side effects. The generic drug usage is a rational prescribing indicator, and the issue of brand drug use needs to be addressed. Our study suggests a strong need for creating awareness in the prescribers regarding the usage of generic drugs as they are cost-effective compared to brand drugs. Our study was carried out for a short duration and study subjects were largely confined to OPD. Thus, the present study provides a baseline to conduct drug utilization studies periodically for a longer duration in a larger sample size to influence the overall improvement of patients on psychotropic drugs in different mental health care settings.

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