

Introduction

Pharmacoeconomics of Treatment-Resistant Schizophrenia

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The National Consensus Conference on the Pharmacoeconomics of Treatment-Resistant Schizophrenia, held in Dallas, Texas, in October 1997, was convened in response to the very serious impact of schizophrenia on our patients, their families, and their communities, as well as the very high expense of treating this illness. The objective of this conference was to bring together health care administrators, physicians, and others in decision-making positions in health care to develop strategies to improve the care given to persons with schizophrenia in hopes of reducing the overall cost of treating this deadly disease.

The meeting focused primarily on treatment-resistant schizophrenia because this is the most serious form of the disease and because the overall management of this illness is a particularly acute problem. One of the most important conclusions to come from this conference was that overall costs can be reduced significantly by beginning aggressive and effective treatment early in the course of the illness. The most effective treatment regimen includes adequate medication. The higher costs of the newer atypical antipsychotic medications are offset by increased hospital discharges and decreased readmission rates. Patients who are managed aggressively on these medications have a better chance of remaining in the community and participating more fully in the world around them.

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