The UK experience - the elephant in the room

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Challenges

- Physical & mental health comorbidity
- Polypharmacy
- Communication
- Cognition
- Choice
- Behavioural side effects
- Cognitive side effects
- Treatment-resistance
- Diagnostic overshadowing
Background
1. Rates of prescribing of antipsychotics and antidepressants are very high.
Data from CPRD General Practice prescribing study

4. Prescribing rates are substantially higher than rates of psychosis or affective disorder.

(Cooper et al, 2007)

- Psychosis
- Affective disorders

4.2.1. Antipsychotic drugs
4.2.3. Drugs used for mania and hypomania
4.3. All Antidepressants

Percent of adults with learning disabilities known to GF

Prescribing
Mental illness
Data from CPRD General Practice prescribing study

2. Prescribing rates rise almost continuously with age

Antipsychotic drugs

All antidepressants
Time trends in new prescriptions of psychotropic drugs in adults with intellectual disability in UK primary care, 1999-2013
Problem

- Nearly 1/3 of people with ID on one of these drugs

- 58% of those on antipsychotics and 32% of those on antidepressants have no relevant diagnosis recorded

- 22.5% were on more than 1 antipsychotic and 5.5% above BNF limits
Based on these figures, the authors estimated that

“.....30-35000 adults with learning disability are on antipsychotics or antidepressants or both without appropriate indications (psychosis or affective disorder)”. 
Mental illness, challenging behaviour, and psychotropic drug prescribing in people with intellectual disability: UK population based cohort study
Rory Sheehan,1 Angela Hassiotos,1 Kate Walters,2 David Osborn,1 André Strydom,1 Laura Horsfall2
Prevalence of antipsychotic prescription, by quarter- learning disabilities (18 and over)

PRE VS. POST

If the current findings were representative to the GP LD register, this roughly equated to 2,000 fewer people prescribed antipsychotics with indications, than were originally anticipated if the pre- STOMP trend had continued.
On comparing the regression model estimates, both the pre-STOMP and post-STOMP slopes showed increasing trends.

If we assume that the number of people with learning disabilities remained more or less the same and the findings were representative of the GP LD register, there were roughly 14,000 more adults with LD, prescribed antidepressants between 2010-1 and 2017-4, in England.
If the current findings were representative of the LD GP register, there were roughly 2,000 fewer adults in England, prescribed anxiolytics, following the launch of the STOMP programme.

Model estimates for both, prescribing rates in presence and in absence of an indication, also showed a declining trend in the post-STOMP period.
Comparing trends before and after STOMP - example
Positive changes in prescribing - adults with learning disabilities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Background or pre-STOMP trend</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall prevalence</td>
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<tr>
<td>antipsychotics</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
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<td>antidepressants</td>
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<td>Change to no significant trend</td>
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<td>anxiolytics</td>
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<td>Prevalence in relation to indications</td>
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<td>antipsychotics with indications</td>
<td>no trend</td>
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<td>antidepressants without indications</td>
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<td>Polypharmacy</td>
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<td>more than one antidepressant</td>
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<td>Change to no significant trend</td>
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<td>more than one drug group</td>
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Prevalence of prescription to anti-epileptics - LD(18 and over)

This shows that the overall prevalence shows a steady rise throughout the study period.

The proportion of those prescribed an antiepileptic at the start of the period (22.6%) was smaller than the corresponding proportion at the last point (25.03%)- p value for comparison of two proportions <0.0005.
Antiepileptic drugs for adults with a learning disability

Antiepileptic drugs now most widely prescribed psychotropic drugs for adults with a learning disability

Wide range of indications and uses
- Bipolar disorder
- Epilepsy
- Challenging behaviours

- Concerns about antiepileptic prescribing
  - To what extent used to manage behaviour
  - Polypharmacy
  - Valproate and women of child bearing age
  - Side effects

- Findings
  - The overall prevalence of prescribing some type of antiepileptic drugs for adults with learning disabilities was 23.3%.

  - At the start of the period, 84.9% of people prescribed an antiepileptic were recorded as having a recognised indication of epilepsy; 15.1% did not. By the end of the period, the proportion with a recognised indication had fallen to 79.6%
Data challenges

Coding issues
Diagnosis
Agreement over drugs and indications
Many drugs have more than one indications
Different formulations of the same drug used for different indications

Issues with data
Number of GP practices not sure whether they are representative of the whole
Some data very difficult to interpret - example – stimulants/children/autism
Findings so far and interpretations

STOMP has improved raising the issues associated with overmedication of people with a learning disability, autism or both.

It is early days for the STOMP programme many initiatives to review the prescribing of psychotropic drugs and have seen some indicators of change

not yet seen that progress through to real change to the prescribing habits of GPs

Is the current “elephant in the room” – Anti-seizure drugs?