

The influence of patients' social characteristics on the selection of treatment strategies for schizophrenia by German psychiatrists



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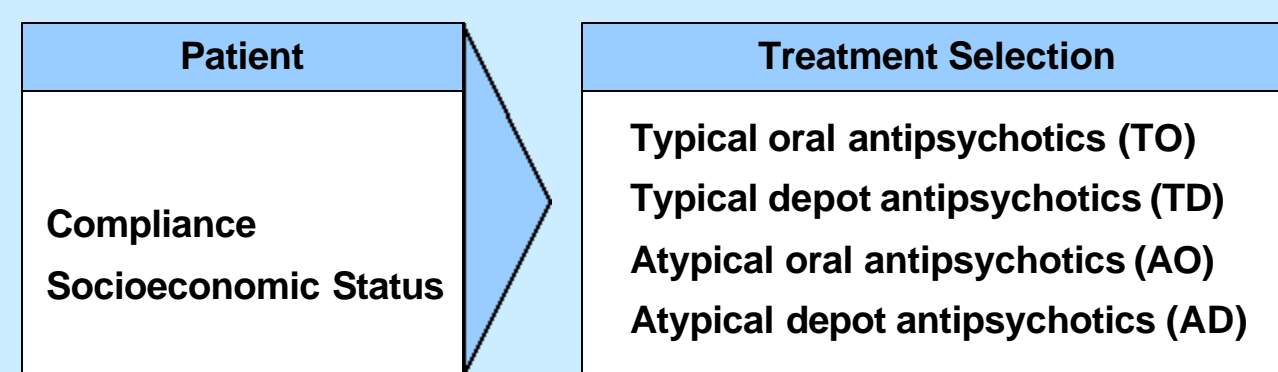
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INTRODUCTION

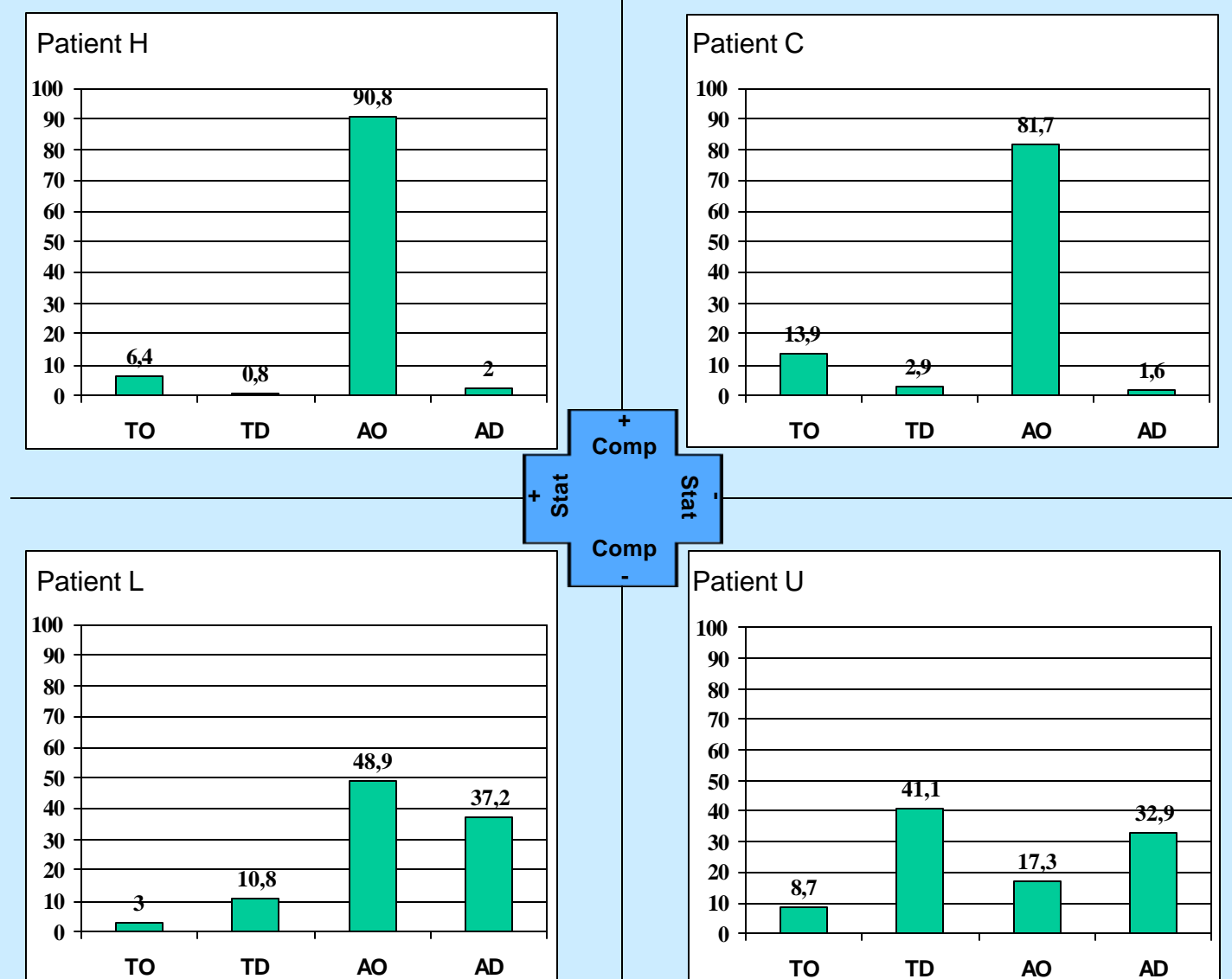
Atypical antipsychotics are seen as a major advance in the treatment of schizophrenia and some psychiatrists even consider them as first-line treatment. Despite their undoubted advantages the usage of atypical antipsychotics is relatively low in Europe and varies according to the characteristics of the patient and prescribing physician, indicating significant differences in the usage of treatments for the same disorder such as schizophrenia [1,2,3]. The explanation of attitudes towards and reasons for the use of certain classes of antipsychotic medication is therefore an important task for the evaluation of current treatment practices of schizophrenia.

OBJECTIVE

To investigate the influence of the patients' compliance and socio-economic status on the selection of four general treatment strategies of schizophrenia:



RESULTS – RELATIVE FREQUENCY

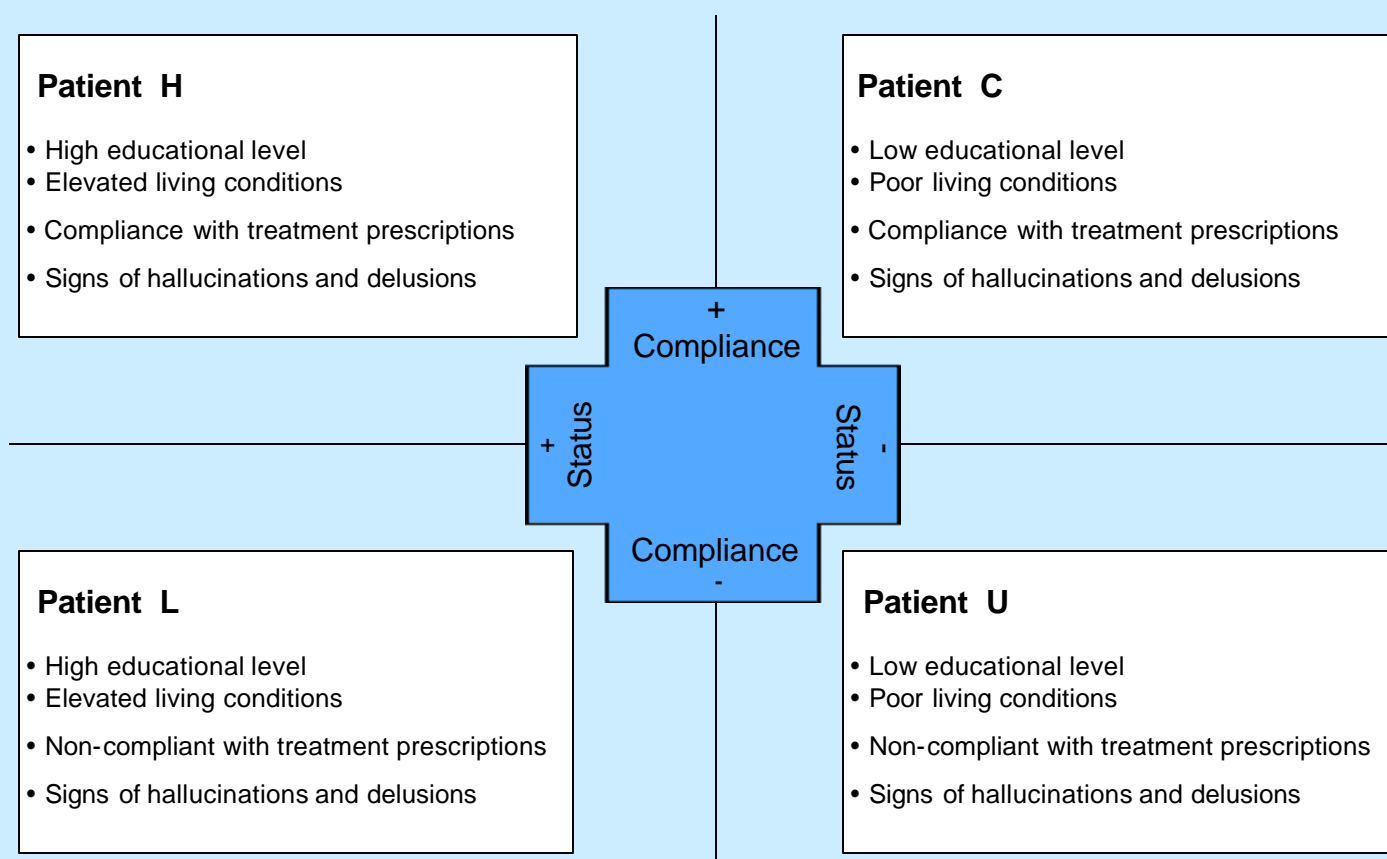


EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

Objective: Measuring the influence of status and compliance on physicians' treatment decisions

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Method: Construction of case vignettes by orthogonally varying status and compliance



DEPENDENT VARIABLES

The decision for one of four treatment strategies was registered for each patient profile

SAMPLING

Target Population: All German Psychiatrists involved in the therapy of schizophrenia (According to data from the German General Medical Council about 5000 physicians)

Sampling: Addresses of physicians were provided by different sources, such as internet databases, the German General Medical Council and a pharmaceutical company

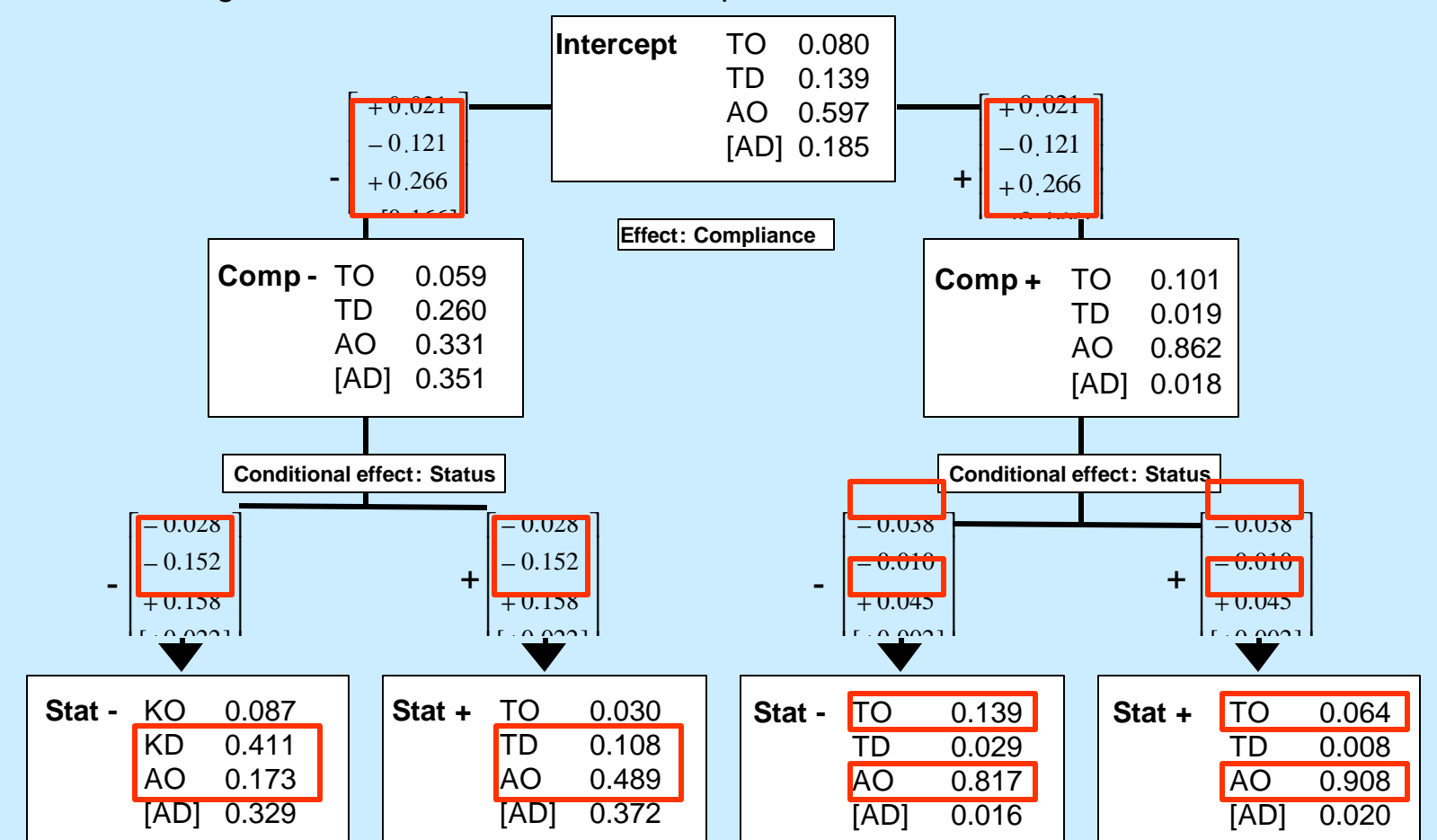
Approach: Between 11/03 and 12/03 a questionnaire was sent by mail to 4214 physicians. The questionnaire had been designed for a larger survey about determinants for antipsychotic treatment selection and contained the case vignettes. 1342 questionnaires were returned (Response Rate 31.8%). The sample was widely representative according to sex and age.

RESULTS – STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Method: Weighted least square model for marginal selection frequencies

Model: Unconditional compliance effects and two separate status effects conditioned on low and high compliance

Results: Significant effects of status and compliance on treatment selection



DISCUSSION

Patients with different social characteristics are not treated in the same way despite similar target symptoms (psychopathology, non-compliance).

In accordance to treatment guidelines the use of depot antipsychotics is associated with non-compliance. However, their use with noncompliant patients of high socio-economic status is relatively low. These findings indicate, that for certain patients atypical oral antipsychotics are still considered as an alternative to depot usage.

As it is known for other countries such as the US [4] the status of a patient also seems to influence the selection of antipsychotic medication in Germany. Patients with low status bear greater risk of being medicated with conventional antipsychotics. Especially patients with low compliance and low socio-economic status face barriers to treatment with second generation medication.

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