

# Pharmacovigilance and patient safety in a Moroccan University hospital.

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## Abstract

### Background:

Adverse drug reactions (ADRs) are a major cause of morbidity and mortality. They carry considerable clinical and economic burdens, as they often lead to hospital admissions, prolonged hospital stays, disability, or even death. The aim of this study was to calculate the spontaneous reporting rate of ADRs in all patients, to measure their associated mortality rate, to identify their risk factors, and the drug classes involved.

### Methods:

This was a descriptive and analytical retrospective study of ADRs reports received by our regional pharmacovigilance center between 2013 and 2018.

### Results:

Adverse drug reactions were reported for 140 patients (reporting rate: 47 cases per million inhabitants per year). The mortality rate was 5.7% (n = 8). 66.4% (n=93) of ADRs were classified as serious. Age, sex, and polypharmacy did not appear to be significant risk factors for the occurrence of ADRs ( $p = 0.835$ ,  $p = 0.071$ , and  $p = 0.055$  respectively) or for ADRs related deaths ( $p = 0.352$  for age;  $p = 0.194$  for sex). In total, 327 drugs were used by the patients. Most ADRs were associated with antimicrobials 31.5% (n=103), analgesics and anti-inflammatory drugs 19% (n=62), and cardiovascular drugs 18% (n=59).

### Conclusion:

The ADRs reporting rate remains low due to several factors, including insufficient knowledge of pharmacovigilance and the absence of an active reporting system. The role of polypharmacy in ADRs occurrence is well recognized. Underreporting remains a major issue in our region, despite a notable mortality rate related to adverse drug reactions. Antimicrobial drugs were the most commonly suspected cause of ADRs, reflecting their widespread use.

**Keywords:** Adverse drug reaction – Reporting – Patient safety - Pharmacovigilance

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## 37 **Introduction**

38 Adverse drug reactions (ADRs) are one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality. It is  
39 estimated that around 2.9–5.6% of all hospital admissions are due to ADRs and as many as  
40 35% of hospitalized patients experience an ADRs during their hospitalization [1].ADRs carry  
41 significant economic and clinical burdens,as they often result in hospital admission, extended  
42 hospital stay, disability or even death.Health care systems can use data on the frequency,  
43 seriousness, causality and avoidability of ADRs to identify medications that should be  
44 targeted to improve patient safety and ultimately reduce ADRs related expenditures.

45 In Morocco, 5% of patients are hospitalized for the ADRs. Since 1989, date of creation of the  
46 CAPM based in Rabat capital of Morocco, becoming a WHO collaborating center in 2011,  
47 new regulatory and scientific processes are being developed to strengthen national  
48 pharmacovigilance system especially regionalization[2].

49 In 2013, and in order to improve patient safety in the eastern region of Morocco, the regional  
50 pharmacovigilance center was created in Oujda.

51 Identifying serious ADRs and their analysis could have a significant impact on reducing the  
52 avoidable ones.

53 The aims of this study were to calculate reporting rate of ADRs in all patients, to measure  
54 their mortality rate and to describe the several factors that influence their occurrence and the  
55 incriminated therapeutic classes.

## 56 **Material and Methods**

### 57 *Study design*

58 We retrospectively assessed and analyzed all cases of ADRs reported to ourregional  
59 pharmacovigilance center between 2013 and 2018.

### 60 *Data collection and analysis*

61 All data were coded and entered into two excel files. The first using ADRs classified  
62 according to the << system organ class >> seriousness and evolution of patients.The second  
63 analyzing the drugs taken, incriminated drug classes and causality assessment achieved by  
64 three methods: WHO, Naranjoand French method. The Imbs [3] method was used to assess  
65 the avoidability of deaths.

66 Computed data was exported into SPSS version 21.0 for analysis. The qualitative variables  
67 were expressed in numbers, percentages and the quantitative ones as means and standard  
68 deviation or median and quartiles according to the distribution of variable.

69 A bivariate analysis was performed using the Chi 2 test or fisher's exact test to compare the  
70 qualitative variables. Any  $p < 0.05$  was considered to be statistically significant.

71 The study was approved by our institution administration. An authorization to conduct the  
72 study in accordance with relevant guidelines and regulations was obtained. Anonymity and  
73 confidentiality were respected.

74

## 75 **Results**

76 A total of 140 cases were reported, with an average of 23 cases per year and a reporting rate of  
77 47 per million inhabitants per year. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive characteristics of the  
78 patients who experienced ADRs (**table 1**).

79 Of the 140 ADRs reported in this study, the skin and subcutaneous tissue were the most  
80 affected (66.4%,  $n=93$ ), followed by liver disorders and extracardiac vascular system  
81 disorders, each accounting for 5% ( $n=7$ ). Most ADRs reported were classified as serious  
82 66.4% ( $n=93$ ). ADRs led to hospitalization in 13% ( $n=12$ ) of cases, extend hospital stay in  
83 48% ( $n=45$ ), caused permanent disability in 3% ( $n=3$ ) and were life threatening in 27%  
84 ( $n=25$ ) of cases. 9% of patients ( $n=8$ ) died as a result of ADRs.

85 To explore the potential determinants of ADRs seriousness and mortality, a bivariate analysis  
86 was conducted. The results are presented in table 2 and 3 (**table 2 and 3**).

87

88 According to the WHO method, the causality of 78.3% ( $n=256$ ) of drugs was assessed as  
89 possible and certain in 1.5% ( $n=5$ ) of cases. Using the Naranjo method, 76.5% ( $n=250$ ) of  
90 drugs were also classified as having possible causality and 0.9% ( $n=3$ ) were considered  
91 certain. According to the French method, the I2 score was the most frequent 31% ( $n=101$ ) and  
92 the I6 score was observed in 4.9% ( $n=16$ ) (**Table 4**).

93 Regarding the avoidability of deaths, the assessment using Imbs method revealed the  
94 following results: (**Table 5**)

95 Of the 327 medications involved, antimicrobials accounted for 31.5% ( $n=103$ ) of the  
96 suspected drugs, followed by anti-inflammatory drugs and analgesics at 19% ( $n=62$ ). The  
97 cardiovascular ones ranked third with 18% ( $n=59$ ). Among the most frequently suspected drugs,  
98 amoxicillin ranked first 7.6% ( $n=25$ ), followed by paracetamol 5.5% ( $n=18$ ) and allopurinol  
99 3.7% ( $n=12$ ).

## 100 **Discussion**

101 *Prevalence of ADRs*

102 Several studies have shown that the rate of ADRs varies between countries. A literature review  
103 by *Stephanie et al.* published in 2011 on the prevalence of ADRs reported a rate of 3.3% in  
104 retrospective studies conducted in Germany and 9.65% in prospective studies [4]. A study  
105 conducted in France by the National Agency for the Safety of Medicines and Health Products  
106 showed that more than 20 000 ADRs were reported in 2007, half of which were classified as  
107 serious [5].

108 An additional challenge is that the incidence of ADRs cannot be accurately measured using  
109 pharmacovigilance data, as the number of patients who experienced an ADRs and the number  
110 of patients exposed to the drug during a specific period are unknown.

111 Spontaneous reporting remains the main source of pharmacovigilance data. However, at  
112 regional, national and international levels, pharmacovigilance systems face a major challenge:  
113 underreporting.

114 A study published in 2006 in *Drug Safety*, which analyzed 37 studies from 12 different  
115 countries estimated that the rate of underreporting is higher than 98% [6].

116 A study conducted in 2011 on ADRs caused by antimalarial drugs between 1968 and 2008  
117 reported a notification rate of 1.2% in developing countries [7].

118 Another study conducted in Denmark in 2012 using data from Vigibase (the international  
119 database of ADRs) covering the period from 2000 to 2009, showed that reporting rates varied  
120 widely across countries from less than 1 per million inhabitants per year in Russia and  
121 Tanzania to 2 in Ukraine, 3 in Saudi Arabia, 38 in Chile, 99 in Morocco, 233 in the United  
122 Kingdom, 261 in Cuba, 300 in Switzerland, 302 in Australia, 333 in Sweden and up to 613 in  
123 New Zealand [8].

124 The 47 ADRs case reports per million inhabitants per year recorded in the city of Oujda,  
125 Morocco confirms underreporting by health professionals with the exception of the  
126 dermatology department, which reported the highest number of cases. In contrast, in the M-G  
127 study by *Guédat et al.* (2012), the internal medicine department accounted for the majority of  
128 reports 70% [9].

### 129 *Factors influencing ADRs*

130 The bivariate analysis indicates that age, sex and polypharmacy are not statistically significant  
131 factors in the occurrence of serious ADRs or mortality related to ADRs. This  
132 could be explained by the small sample size.

133 In our study, adults aged between 11 and 65 years were also affected by ADRs with a mean age  
134 of 42 years. This contrasts with other studies that highlight the vulnerability of older  
135 populations with an average age of 76 years (*Pirmohamed et al*, 2004) and 72 years old [10].

136 The sex ratio for ADRs was 1.14 in favor of females, which agrees with the findings of L.  
137 *Aagaard et al* (2012) who reported that 60% of ADRs occurred in women and *N. Moore et al*

138 (1998)[11]. A Dutch study investigating ADRs in consumers of selective serotonin reuptake  
139 inhibitors drugs confirms these results[12].

140 An American study published in 2016, based on an analysis of the food and drug  
141 administration database revealed that among 20 of the most commonly used treatment protocols in  
142 the United States, 307 drugs showed sex differences in the occurrence of ADRs[13].

143 A Swedish study conducted between 2005 and 2012 on ADRs related to antihypertensive drugs  
144 showed a high prevalence of reports among women in 6 out of 10 groups[14]. This can be  
145 partly explained by pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic differences between the two sexes  
146 [15].

147 Other factors contributing to this sex differences included variations in body mass, hormonal  
148 levels, drug consumption patterns, frequency of hospital visits, and also the higher adherence to  
149 medical prescriptions among women [16].

150 However, according to a meta-analysis of observational studies published in 2016, which  
151 analyzed data from February 2002 to July 2013, no significant difference was observed[17].

152 Polypharmacy was common: 43% (n=60) of patients were on monotherapy, while 57%  
153 (n=80) were taking more than one drug, which agrees with the study by *M. von Euler et al*  
154 (2006) which showed that ADRs occurred more frequently in patients taking an average of 8.3  
155 medications. Another study involving 2185 elderly patients on polypharmacy found that this  
156 group was more likely to develop ADRs[18].

#### 157 *Seriousness of adverse effects*

158 Among the 140 reported cases, 66.4% (n=93) were classified as serious, reflecting both: the  
159 frequency of serious ADRs and the tendency of healthcare professionals to underreport non-  
160 serious ones[19].

161 A total of 22.2% (n=3) of patients at extreme ages died. Although mortality appears to be  
162 higher in the extreme age group, the difference is not statistically significant. To confirm this  
163 difference statistically, a larger dataset would be required.

#### 164 *Deaths analysis*

165 Deaths caused by drug-induced iatrogenesis are important in our series. Among the 140 ADRs  
166 reported, 5.7% were fatal (n=8). However, they represent 12.5% of the cases for which  
167 outcomes were known. ADRs are therefore a major cause of death in this population. This  
168 percentage exceeds the 1.7% reported in the study by *S. Schneeweiss et al* (2002) [20].

169 In 2000, an analysis of American studies published since 1992 reported a mortality rate of 2.7%  
170 among all hospitalized patients[21]. An Ethiopian study from 2018 reported a death rate of  
171 1.5%[22]. In four South African hospitals, the rate was 16%[23]. In the United States, hepatic  
172 ADRs are the leading cause of liver failure, far surpassing viral and other causes[24].

173 In our study, women were more affected by the occurrence of ADRs, but men had a higher risk  
174 of death. Patients with serious ADRs had a higher mortality rate than those with non-  
175 serious ones.

176 Approximately half of the death cases involved cutaneous eruptions, followed by  
177 respiratory distress syndrome. All medications were prescribed, ruling out the role of self-  
178 medication. Deaths occurred across all age groups.

179 On the 8 recorded death cases, 3 (37.5%) were related to allopurinol (cases 1, 6 and 7) a drug  
180 commonly prescribed for symptomatic hyperuricemia and the treatment of gout. Allopurinol  
181 is known to be the leading cause of severe bullous reactions in Europe including Stevens-  
182 Johnson syndrome (SJS), toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN) and Lyell's syndrome. It is also one  
183 of the main causes of drug rash with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS  
184 syndrome). Allopurinol should only be prescribed when clearly indicated. It must not  
185 be initiated in cases of asymptomatic hyperuricemia. Treatment should be started at a low dose  
186 and be increased gradually. Patients should be advised to stop allopurinol immediately if a rash  
187 or itching occurs.

188 In order to limit the risk of serious bullous reactions, the starting dose of allopurinol should not  
189 exceed 100mg per day and should be gradually increased every 1-2 months.

190 Renal function must be assessed prior to prescription, especially in older adults. Allopurinol  
191 and its active metabolite are eliminated by renal excretion. In patients with advanced kidney  
192 disease, drug accumulation may lead to prolonged half-life. Therefore, the dose of Allopurinol  
193 must be adjusted according to creatinine clearance [25].

194 Case 2 involved a newborn who received vitamin D supplementation for rickets  
195 prevention. Sterogyl 15 "H"<sup>®</sup> 600,000 IU/1.5 ml is indicated for the treatment and prophylaxis  
196 of vitamin D deficiency in adults. It is contraindicated in children due to its high vitamin D  
197 content [26].

198 In cases 3 and 4, the respiratory distress syndrome caused by Interstitial lung disease is a known  
199 ADR of Docetaxel [27]. Corticosteroid therapy appears to reduce the incidence of this effect  
200 and/or delay its onset [28].

201 Case 5 presented with pulmonary-renal syndrome, characterized by alveolar hemorrhage and  
202 glomerulonephritis. The patient was receiving a daily dose of 2g of amoxicillin/ clavulanic  
203 acid, which should have been reduced to 1.5g and subsequently adjusted according to renal  
204 function [29].

205 Regarding case 8, the patient was a man in his sixties who developed anaphylaxis  
206 immediately after receiving rituximab for the first time for the treatment of MALT (mucosa-  
207 associated lymphoid tissue) Lymphoma.

208 Table 6 provides an overview of all cases of death associated with reported ADRs (**Table 6**):

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### *Avoidability of deaths assessment*

50% (n=4) of deaths were judged to be absolutely or potentially avoidable, highlighting the importance of integrating pharmacovigilance principles into daily clinical practice to improve patient safety.

### *Incriminated therapeutic classes*

31.5% of suspected drugs belong to the antimicrobial class, which is consistent with the study by *Rajan A et al.* [30], where antimicrobials ranked second after various vaccines, with a rate of 7.5%. This highlights both, the potential risk of this drug class to cause ADRs and their higher use.

### **Conclusion**

ADRs are among the leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide. The aim of this study was to analyze all reports received by our regional pharmacovigilance center between 2013 and 2018. Several observations were made, and factors influencing the occurrence of ADRs were studied. Age, sex and polypharmacy do not appear to predispose patients to serious ADRs or mortality resulting from ADRs. However, a larger sample is needed to better study these factors.

Prospective studies and surveys are necessary to detect and quantify the occurrence of ADRs, and where possible, to reduce healthcare costs associated with ADRs.

### *Conflicts of interest*

The authors state that they have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>N (%)</b>
<b>Patients</b>	140
<b>Age (Years) (Average±SD)</b>	42 ± 20
<i>Adults (More than 11 and less than 65 years)</i>	113 (86.9%)
<i>Extreme Ages (0-11 years and &gt;65 years)</i>	17 (13.1%)
<b>Sex</b>	
<i>Female</i>	75 (53.5%)
<i>Male</i>	65 (46.8%)
<b>Medical prescription/self medication</b>	
<i>Medical Prescription</i>	124 (88.5%)
<i>Self medication</i>	16 (11.5%)
<b>Drug intake (number)</b>	
<i>1 drug</i>	60 (43%)
<i>2 drugs or more</i>	80 (57%)
<b>Nature of ADRs</b>	
<i>Skin and subcutaneous tissue disorders</i>	93 (66.4%)
<i>Liver disorders</i>	7 (5%)
<i>Extracardiac vascular system disorders</i>	7 (5%)
<b>Seriousness of ADRs</b>	
<i>Serious</i>	93 (66.4%)
<i>Non serious</i>	47 (33.6%)
<b>Seriousness criteria</b>	
<i>Death</i>	8 (9%)
<i>Life threatening</i>	25 (27%)
<i>Permanent disability</i>	3 (3%)
<i>Hospitalization</i>	12 (13%)
<i>Hospital stay extension</i>	45 (48%)
<b>Evolution</b>	
<i>Favorable</i>	56 (87.5%)
<i>Death</i>	8 (12.5%)

**Table Error! Main Document Only. : Descriptive characteristics of ADRs reports**

Factors	Serious ADRs		P
	No	Yes	
Age			
<i>Adult</i>	6 (35.3%)	11 (64.7%)	0.835
<i>Extremes</i>	37 (32.7%)	76 (67.3%)	
Sex			
<i>Female</i>	26 (35.1%)	48 (64.9%)	0.585
<i>Male</i>	20 (30.8%)	45 (69.2%)	
Polypharmacy			
<i>Yes</i>	28(35%)	52(65%)	0.679
<i>No</i>	19(32%)	41(68%)	

**Table 2: Factors related to the occurrence of serious ADRs according to a bivariate analysis**

Factors	No – Death	Death	P
	N(%)	N(%)	
Age			
<i>Adult</i>	44 (88%)	6 (12%)	0.352
<i>Extremes</i>	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	
Sex			
<i>F</i>	34 (92%)	3 (8%)	0.194
<i>M</i>	22 (81.5%)	5 (18.5%)	
Seriousness of ADRs			
<i>Yes</i>	39 (83%)	8 (17%)	0.071
<i>No</i>	17 (100%)	0 (0%)	
Polypharmacy			
<i>Yes</i>	30 (88.2%)	4 (11.8%)	0.572
<i>No</i>	26 (86.7%)	4 (13.3%)	

**Table 3: Factors related to the occurrence of deaths according to a bivariate analysis**

<b>Causality assessment</b>	
<b>WHO Method</b>	
<i>Possible</i>	256 (78,3%)
<i>Unlikely</i>	40 (12,2%)
<i>Likely</i>	26 (8%)
<i>Certain</i>	5 (1,5%)
<b>Naranjo Method</b>	
<i>Possible</i>	250 (76,5%)
<i>Likely</i>	61 (18,7%)
<i>Unlikely</i>	7 (2,1%)
<i>Doubtful</i>	6 (1,8%)
<i>Certain</i>	3 (0,9%)
<b>French Method</b>	
<i>I0</i>	5 (1,5%)
<i>I1</i>	77 (23,5%)
<i>I2</i>	101 (30,9%)
<i>I3</i>	76 (23,3%)
<i>I4</i>	9 (2,8%)
<i>I5</i>	43 (13,1%)
<i>I6</i>	16 (4,9%)

**Table 4: Causality assessment results**

<b>Case</b>	<b>Avoidability</b>
<b>1</b>	Potentially avoidable
<b>2</b>	Absolutely avoidable
<b>3</b>	Absolutely unavoidable
<b>4</b>	Absolutely unavoidable
<b>5</b>	Absolutely unavoidable
<b>6</b>	Absolutely avoidable
<b>7</b>	Potentially avoidable
<b>8</b>	Absolutely unavoidable

**Table 5: Avoidability of deaths assessment**

Case	Age Range and Sex	Suspected drug (S) and Concomitant use (C)	Daily dose	ADRs	Time to onset	Observation	Prescription Or Self medication
1	[55-59] year / M	Allopurinol (S) Ramipril (C) Bisoprolol (C) Aspirine (C)	400mg 5mg 1.25mg 160mg	DRESS	45 days 21 days 21 days 15 days	Hyperuricemia/ Bladder cancer	Prescription
2	[0-3] months / M	Vitamine D (S)	600 000 UI	Renal failure /néphrocalcinosis	21 days	Rickets prophylaxis	Prescription
3	[35-39] years / F	Docetaxel (S)	100mg/m <sup>2</sup>	Acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)	11 days	-	Prescription
4	[40-44] years / F	Docetaxel (S)	600mg	ARDS	15 days	Comorbidity: hypertension treated by calcium channel blockers	Prescription
5	[50-54] years / M	Amoxicillin+Clavulanic acid (S), Ciprofloxacin (C)	2g 500mg	DRESS	13 days	Pulmonary renal syndrome with lower limb purpuric lymphoma	Prescription
6	[30-34] years / M	Allopurinol (S) Amoxicillin+Clavulanic acid (C) Oméprazole (C) Dompéridone (C)	200mg	Lyell Syndrome	10 days	Diabetes, pre terminal renal failure (Clearance 10ml/min) Sickle cell anemia	Prescription
7	[80-84] years / F	Allopurinol (S)	300mg	Lyell Syndrome	6 days	Comorbidity : Diabetes with insulin, hypertension	Prescription
8	[65-69] years / M	Rituximab (S) Paracetamol (C) Ondansetron (C) Méthylprednisolone (C)	700mg	Anaphylaxis	Immediately	-	Prescription

**Table 6 : Description of deaths**