

Self-intoxication warranting ICU admission: are illicit drugs the main problem in a tertiary hospital in Belgium?

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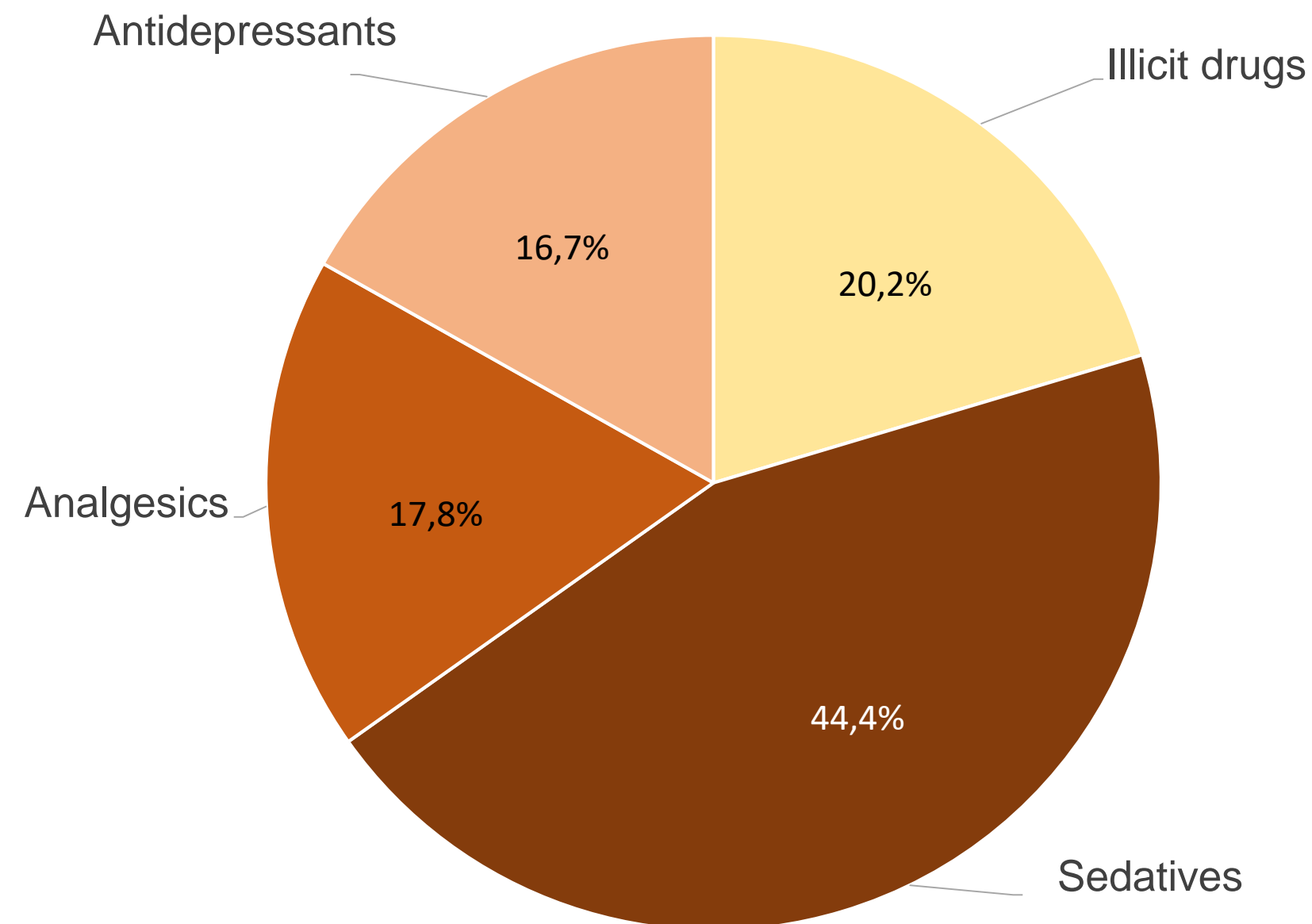
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Background

The use of recreational drugs in Belgium is reported to increase every year, causing important general socio-economic and healthcare problems. In addition, an important part of ICU admissions appeared attributed to self-intoxication. We therefore tried to identify whether illicit drugs are a growing problem of ICU admissions related to self-intoxication and whether this subgroup differs from the general population of self-intoxicated patients admitted to the ICU.

Methods

In this retrospective cohort study, we included all patients admitted to the ICU at Jessa, Hasselt (Belgium) from 01/01/2017 to 31/12/2022 with an admission diagnosis of 'intoxication'. The collected data comprised baseline patient characteristics and comorbidities, substance of intoxication and data on outcome including ICU- and hospital length of stay and mortality in the ICU, in the hospital, and after one year.



Conclusion

Prescribed drugs, including sedatives, analgesics and antidepressants, and not illicit drugs are the main reason for self-intoxication needing ICU admission in a tertiary hospital in Belgium.

Results

From 01/01/2017 to 31/12/2022 a total of 342 patients were admitted to our ICU because of self-intoxication and thereby represent 2,44% of all ICU admissions. Of all self-intoxications, only 20,20% included illicit drugs, whereas 78,90% were caused by ingestion of prescribed drugs (sedatives 44,40%, analgesics 17,80% and antidepressants 16,70%). Baseline characteristics were comparable with the overall population of self-intoxicated patients admitted to our ICU. Mortality in the ICU (1,27%) as well as hospital mortality (2,53%) were low and did also not differ from the overall population of self-intoxicated patients. Mortality after one year (6,83%) was higher as compared to hospital mortality, but again in line with 1-year-mortality in the overall population of self-intoxicated patients that were admitted to our ICU.