ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

The baseline level of depressive symptoms, as measured by gold standard scales such as the Montgomery Asberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS), plays an important role in allowing efficacy demonstration of antidepressants in clinical trials. Symptoms with low endorsement contribute to poor evidence of drug-related improvement. We previously examined MADRS baseline patient ratings from multiple industry-sponsored MDD studies across multiple regions of the world and found Reduced Appetite and Suicidal Thoughts to be the lowest severity items endorsed. The present study extends our work by determining the level to which these low-endorsed MADRS items correspond to total score and other MADRS items, and by determining whether such correlation patterns vary across regions.

METHOD

2224 baseline MADRS ratings were examined from patients in multiple industry-sponsored MDD clinical trials across 15 countries in 4 regions: US (N=1624), Asia (N=184), Eastern Europe (N=197), Western Europe (N=219). As previously described, MADRS items were examined by region for overall severity using MANOVA, and for proportions of low endorsement (scores of 0 or 1) using chi-square (χ²), with effect sizes determined by Cramer's V (V), using the eta squared (η²), and by Cohen's d (d) for proportions of low endorsement (operationalized as scores of 0 or 1) using chi-square (χ²), with effect sizes determined by Cramer's V (V), using the eta squared (η²), and by Cohen's d (d) for proportions of low endorsement (operationalized as scores of 0 or 1) using chi-square (χ²), with effect sizes determined by Cramer's V (V), using the eta squared (η²), and by Cohen's d (d) for proportions of low endorsement (operationalized as scores of 0 or 1) using chi-square (χ²), with effect sizes determined by Cramer's V (V), using the eta squared (η²), and by Cohen's d (d)

RESULTS

The MADRS items with the lowest correlations with the MADRS total score were Suicidal Thoughts and Reduced Appetite (r's ranged from .29 to .52) within each region, Suicidal Thoughts and Reduced Appetite detracted most from overall depressive severity and to other depressive symptoms in four geographic regions.

CONCLUSION

The findings extend what is understood about MDD patients entering international clinical trials. In our international sample of 2224 MDD clinical trials patients at baseline, the symptom that best predicted overall depressive severity on the MADRS within and across geographic region was Reported Sadness, accounting for 22% of the variance of all other items. In our international sample of 2224 MDD clinical trials patients, the items with the lowest correlation with overall MADRS depression severity scores were Suicidal Thoughts and Reduced Appetite. These two items were also the least frequently endorsed of all MADRS items almost 20 years ago in a US sample of hospitalized depressed patients.

Reduced Appetite and Suicidal Thoughts have been shown to be associated with low treatment effect sizes in 2 US studies.

The low levels of baseline Reduced Appetite and Suicidal Thoughts we found in our international sample, and their relatively low contribution to overall depressive symptom severity, are supportive of this (5) finding. The support for the finding may be applicable to international trials as well.

REFERENCES
