



Antidepressants

BQIS Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual's health and safety and to improving their quality of life. This document provides general information on the topic and is not intended to replace team assessment, decision-making, or medical advice. This is the eighth of ten Fact Sheets regarding psychotropic medications.

Intended Outcomes

Individuals will understand why antidepressants are prescribed, how they work, the range and severity of side effects, how the physician monitors this medicine, and the actions needed to support someone on these medications.

Definitions

Antidepressants: A medication often used to improve mood or reduce anxiety or agitation.

Tyramine: A compound found in many aged or processed foods, produced from the natural breakdown of the amino acid, tyrosine, which includes foods that are aged, dried, fermented, salted, smoked or pickled; all nuts; and all alcoholic and fermented drinks.

Facts

- There are different types of antidepressants:
 - Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)
 - Serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)
 - Tricyclic (TCAs)
 - Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)
- MAOIs can cause a dangerous rise in blood pressure if an individual eats any food containing tyramine
- These medicines work by decreasing:
 - Mood swings
 - Depression
 - Anxiety



- Common side effects (may decrease after several weeks):
 - Weight gain or weight loss
 - Upset stomach, nausea, vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Headaches
 - Anxiety/agitation/restlessness or nervousness
 - Tremors/shaking
 - Sedation/drowsiness
 - Insomnia/trouble sleeping
 - Dizziness
 - Increased sweating
 - Difficulty with sexual functioning
- Occasional side effects (needs to be reported to the physician within several weeks):
 - Frequent yawning
 - Blurred vision
 - Tiredness/fatigue
- Occasional but serious side effects (call the physician that day):
 - New or increased suicidal thoughts
 - Less need for sleep, talking fast, feeling very excited or irritable
 - A rise in blood pressure or heart rate
- Side effects that are dangerous (go to the emergency room immediately):
 - Seizures
 - Restlessness with confusion, shaking or jerking, sweating or the skin turning red
- How the physician monitors this medicine:
 - Checking for a past history or family history of mania
 - Checking pulse rate and blood pressure at each visit
 - Reviews information such as weight records, sleep pattern, activity level, and the behavioral information presented at each appointment



Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

1. Give medications as prescribed.
2. Watch for anything different/change in status of the individual and for signs and symptoms of medication side effects.
3. Write down any signs and symptoms of medication side effects and changes in status of the individual that you notice.
4. Tell the supervisor or nurse about any noted signs and symptoms of medication side effects or changes in the individual immediately, as indicated according to the seriousness of symptoms as listed above.
5. Seek medical attention as indicated according to the seriousness of symptoms as listed above.
6. Watch for the effectiveness of medication by writing down notes on the individual's behavior that relate to diagnosis.
7. Make sure AIMS (Abnormal Involuntary Movement Scale) test is completed and the results of AIMS and other notes including weight are presented to the physician or psychiatrist during scheduled appointments.

Learning Assessment

The following questions can be used to verify a person's competency regarding the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. Antidepressants are used to decrease:
 - A. Depression
 - B. Anxiety
 - C. Mood swings
 - D. All of the above



2. Common side effects of antidepressants include:
 - A. Headaches
 - B. Muscle twitching
 - C. Seizures
 - D. Hair Loss
3. Occasional side effects of antidepressants include:
 - A. Blurred vision
 - B. Confusion
 - C. Trouble speaking
 - D. Nausea
4. Serious side effects of antidepressants include:
 - A. Suicidal thoughts
 - B. Irritability
 - C. Bed-wetting
 - D. Hair loss
5. To help monitor the condition of someone receiving an antipsychotic medication, it is important to do all of the following except:
 - A. Watch for any changes in the individual
 - B. Write down your observations of possible side effects of medications
 - C. Tell your supervisor how the individual is doing every other month
 - D. Take notes on behavior and weight to medical appointments for the physician/psychiatrist's review



References

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National Institutes of Health: National Institute of Mental Health. What is depression? Retrieved 08/01/2015 from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression/index.shtml?rf=3247#pub6>.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services: U. S. Food and Drug Administration. Understanding antidepressant medications. Retrieved 08/01/2015 from <http://www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm095980.htm>.

Related Resources

Fact Sheet SSRIs and SNRIs

Learning Assessment Answers

1. D
2. A
3. A
4. A
5. C