

HEALTH & SAFETY: PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATIONS

“Typical Antipsychotics”

BQIS/Outreach 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 is the second of ten Fact Sheets regarding Psychotropic Medications.

Objectives

Individuals will understand why typical antipsychotics are prescribed, how they work, common side effects, occasional side effects, serious side effects, how the physician monitors these medicines, and the actions needed to support someone on these medications.

Definitions

Typical Antipsychotics: medications used to decrease psychosis, mania, tics and serious aggressive outbursts. Typical antipsychotics include Haloperidol (Haldol), Thorazine (Chlorpromazine), Fluphenzaine (Prolixin), Perphenazine (Trilifon), Pimozide (Orap).

Psychosis: a symptom or feature of mental illness typically characterized by radical changes in personality, impaired functioning, and a distorted or nonexistent sense of objective reality.

Mania: an abnormally happy mental state, typically characterized by exaggerated feelings of happiness, lack of inhibitions, racing thoughts, diminished need for sleep, talkativeness, risk taking, and irritability.

Insomnia: the inability to obtain an adequate amount or quality of sleep.

Tic: an involuntary, compulsive, rapid, repetitive, stereotyped movement or vocalization.

Facts

- Typical antipsychotics are available in:
 - Liquid and Tablets (Depending on the medication given)
 - Immediate and time released injections (Depending on the medication given)
- These medicines work by:
 - Decreasing psychosis
 - Decreasing mania

- Decreasing tics
- Decreasing severe aggressive outbursts
- Common side effects include:
 - Sedation or insomnia
 - Dry mouth
 - Weight gain
 - Sun burn when exposed to the sun
 - GI upset
- Occasional side effects (call the physician within one week):
 - Drooling
 - Inability to sit still or restlessness
 - Slowing of movements with a decrease in facial expressions
 - Sexual dysfunction
 - Menstrual cycle abnormalities
 - Enlargement or breast discharge in men or women
- Occasional but serious side effects (call the physician immediately):
 - Stiffness or muscle spasms in the tongue, jaw, or neck
 - Seizures
- Very rare but extremely serious side effects (Need to go to the ER immediately):
 - Stiffness, fever, and confusion
 - Stiffness without breathing or swallowing
 - Yellowing of the skin or eyes
 - Brown urine or clay colored stool
 - Recurrent infections or illnesses that do not get better
- How the physician monitors these medicines:
 - Abnormal Involuntary Movement Scale (AIMS) to check the face, arms, legs, neck, shoulder, and hips for any abnormal movements
 - Weight and abdominal circumference

Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

1. Administer medications as prescribed
2. Watch for anything different/change in status about the person and for signs and symptoms of side effects of medications
3. Document noted signs and symptoms of side effects of medications and changes in status of the person
4. Communicate noted signs and symptoms of side effects of medications and changes in status of the person to supervisor/nurse immediately

5. Seek medical attention as indicated according to the seriousness of symptoms as listed above
6. Monitor for effectiveness of medication by documenting target behavior data that relate to diagnosis
7. Ensure AIMS is completed and results of AIM and other data including weight is presented to physician/psychiatrist during scheduled appointments

Learning Assessment

Questions that can be used to verify a person's competency in the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. Typical antipsychotics are used to decrease:
 - A. Psychosis
 - B. Mania
 - C. Tics
 - D. All of the above
2. Common side effects of typical antipsychotics include all of the following except:
 - A. Weight gain
 - B. GI upset
 - C. Seizures
 - D. Sedation
3. Occasional side effects include:
 - A. Weight gain
 - B. Drooling
 - C. Restlessness
 - D. B and C
4. Physician monitoring of typical antipsychotics include:
 - A. Blood sugar
 - B. Abnormal involuntary movements
 - C. Blood count
 - D. Liver function
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 person
 - B. Document observations of possible side effects of medications
 - C. Report to your supervisor how the person is doing every other month
 - D. Take target behavior and weight data to medical appointments for the physician/psychiatrist's review

References

- Dulcan MK (editor). Helping Parents, Youth, and Teachers Understand Medications for Behavioral and Emotional Problems: A Resource Book of Medication Information Handouts, Third Edition. Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Publishing, 2007
- Stahl SM. Essential Psychopharmacology: The Prescriber's Guide. Cambridge, UK, The Press Syndicate of The University of Cambridge, 2005
- Craig A. Erickson, M.D. Assistant Professor of Psychiatry; Chief, Fragile X Syndrome Clinic Indiana University School of Medicine; Riley Hospital Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Clinic

Related Resources

- American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry www.aacap.org/cs/forFamilies
- National Institute of Mental Health
nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/mental-health-medications/complete-index.shtml
- Psychiatric Medication Series Fact Sheets: “Atypical Antipsychotics”, “Depakote”, “Lithium”, “SSRIs and SNRIs”, and “Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome”

Learning Assessment Answers

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

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OR-FS-HS-PM-10(06-30-10)