



Atypical Antipsychotics

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 first of ten Fact Sheets regarding psychotropic medications.

Intended Outcomes

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

Definitions

Atypical antipsychotics: Medications used to decrease mood swings, psychosis, mania, severe aggression, depression, agitation, or tics. They are commonly used instead of typical antipsychotics because they typically cause less severe side effects. Atypical antipsychotics include clozapine (Clozaril), olanzapine (Zyprexa), risperidone (Risperdal), paliperidone (Invega), quetiapine (Seroquel), aripiprazole (Abilify), lurasidone (Latuda), and ziprasidone (Geodon).

Psychosis: A symptom or feature of mental illness typically characterized by extreme changes in personality, impaired functioning, and a distorted or confused sense of reality.

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

Tic: An involuntary, compulsive, rapid, repetitive, movement or vocalization.

Insomnia: A sleep disorder in which it is hard to fall asleep and/or stay asleep.

Depression: A mental state characterized by sad feelings of gloom and inadequacy.

Facts

- Atypical antipsychotics are available in:
 - Liquid
 - Tablets
 - Fast-disintegrating tablets
 - Long-acting and short-acting injections (depending on the medication prescribed)



HEALTH & SAFETY: PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATIONS

Atypical Antipsychotics

FACT SHEET

- These medicines work by decreasing:
 - Mood swings
 - Depression
 - Mania
 - Severe aggressive outbursts
 - Psychosis
 - Agitation
 - Tics
- Common side effects include:
 - Dry mouth
 - Weight gain
 - Sleepiness/sedation or insomnia
 - Sunburn when exposed to the sun
 - Stomach upset
- Occasional side effects (call the physician within one week):
 - Drooling
 - Cannot sit still/restlessness
 - Slowing of movements and making less facial expressions
 - Difficulty with sexual functioning
 - Menstrual cycle irregularities
 - Enlargement of the breasts 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
 - Increased thirst and urination



- Very rare but extremely serious side effects (go to the emergency room immediately):
 - Stiffness, fever, and confusion
 - Stiffness without breathing or swallowing
- How the physician monitors these medicines:
 - Vital signs: pulse rate, temperature, respiration rate, and blood pressure
 - Blood test yearly to measure blood sugar and fasting lipid panel (these medications can raise cholesterol and blood sugar)
 - Abnormal Involuntary Movement Scale (AIMS) test to check the face, arms, legs, neck, shoulders, and hips for any abnormal movements
 - Weight and abdominal measurements

Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

1. Give medications as prescribed.
2. Watch for anything different/change in status of the individual and for signs of medication side effects.
3. Write down any signs or symptoms of medication side effects or changes in status of the individual.
4. Tell your supervisor or nurse about any noted signs and symptoms of medication side effects or changes in the individual immediately.
5. Seek medical attention if the symptoms seem serious as listed above.
6. Watch for how well medication may be working by writing down notes on the individual's behavior that relate to their diagnosis.
7. Make sure AIMS is completed and results of AIMS and other information including weight is presented to 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. Atypical antipsychotics are used to decrease:
 - A. Depression
 - B. Mania
 - C. Mood swings
 - D. All of the above
2. Common side effects of atypical antipsychotics include all of the following except:
 - A. Weight gain
 - B. Stomach 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 atypical antipsychotics includes blood work for:
 - A. Blood sugar
 - B. Thyroid function
 - C. Blood count
 - D. Liver function



5. To help watch 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. Document observations of possible side effects of medications
 - C. Report to your supervisor on how the individual is doing every other month
 - D. Take target behavior and weight data to medical appointments for the physician or psychiatrist review

References

Muench, J. & Hamer, A. M. (2010). Adverse effects of antipsychotic medications. *American Family Physician*, 81 (5), 617-622.

Nasrallah, H. A. & Kuo, I. (2003). Side Effects and Bipolar Disorder: Side Effects of Atypical Antipsychotic Agents. *Medscape Psychiatry*, 8 (2). Retrieved 08/01/2015 from http://www.medscape.org/viewarticle/460487_2.

Zagaria, M. E. (2010). Common adverse effects of antipsychotic agents in the elderly. *US Pharmacy*, 35 (11), 22-26.

Related Resources

Psychiatric Medication Series Fact Sheets: “Typical Antipsychotics”, “Depakote”, “Lithium”, “SSRIs and SNRIs”, and “Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome”

Learning Assessment Answers

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