

HEALTH & SAFETY: PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATIONS

“Depakote”

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 third of six Fact Sheets regarding Psychotropic Medications.

Objectives

Individuals will understand why Depakote is prescribed, how it works, common side effects of Depakote, occasional side effects of Depakote, signs and symptoms that the Depakote level may be too high, how the physician monitors this medicine, and the actions needed to support someone on this medicine.

Definitions

Depakote: A medication used to decrease mood swings and serious aggressive outbursts. It may also be used to control seizures.

Facts

- Depakote is available in:
 - Liquid and Tablets (Depending on the form given, Depakote should be taken one to four times a day as prescribed)
- This medicine works by:
 - Decreasing mood swings.
 - Decreasing severe aggressive outbursts.
- Common side effects (may decrease after several weeks):
 - Weight gain
 - Upset stomach (maybe helped if taken with food) or cramps
 - Sedation
 - Decreased coordination

- Increased body and/or facial hair or hair loss
- Tremor in the hands
- Changes in menstrual cycle
- Acne
- Dangerous side effects (Needs to be reported to the physician immediately):
 - Severe agitation
 - Yellowing of skin and/or eyes
 - Brown urine or clay colored stool
 - Swelling of the face or extremities
 - Easy bruising
 - Recurrent infections or illness that does not remit
 - Severe stomach pain
 - Vomiting for several hours
 - Skin rash
 - Ulcers in the mouth
 - Confusion
- How the physician monitors this medicine:
 - Blood test on a regular basis to monitor the Depakote level in the blood
 - Blood draw should occur first thing in the morning (prior to the am dose of Depakote)
 - Blood will also be drawn to check liver function and blood count

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 data including that for target behaviors 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. Depakote is used to decrease:
 - A. Depression
 - B. Anxiety
 - C. Mood swings
 - D. Auditory hallucinations
2. Common side effects of Depakote include:
 - A. Weight gain
 - B. Tremors
 - C. Hair loss
 - D. All of the above
3. Dangerous side effects of Depakote include:
 - A. Weight gain
 - B. Confusion
 - C. Easy bruising
 - D. B and C
4. The physician monitors this medication by checking:
 - A. Thyroid
 - B. Sodium
 - C. Glucose
 - D. Liver function
5. To help monitor the condition of someone receiving an Depakote, 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 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”, “Typical Antipsychotics”, “Lithium”, “SSRIs and SNRIs”, and “Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome”

Learning Assessment Answers

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

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As a service for persons supporting individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities, Outreach and the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community developed the Outreach Fact Sheet Library. The information provided is designed to enhance the understanding of the topic and does not replace other professional or medical instructions or individually developed plans. For more fact sheets and information, please visit DDRSOutreach.IN.gov and www.iidc.indiana.edu/training.



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