Psychoactive Medications

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PSYCHOACTIVE MEDICATIONS

Definition:
Any medication which has the capability to alter mood, anxiety, behavior or cognitive processes; usually denotes drugs used in the treatment of mental illness.
Reasons for Prescribing

Changing One’s Internal Experience

- Improve performance
- Pleasure and relaxation
- Sleep
- To decrease worry
- Sadness
- Out of control
- Pain relief
OTC Psychoactive Medications

- Alcohol
- Nicotine
- Caffeine/No Doz
- Marijuana
- Antihistamines
- Cold Medications
- Diet Pills
- Tylenol/NSAIDS/Aspirin
- Codeine/Heroin
General Classes of Medications

Antidepressants

- Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI)
- Tricyclic antidepressants (TCA)
- Wellbutrin
General Classes of Medications

Anti-anxiety

• Benzodiazepines
• Buspar
• Beta-blockers
• Tricyclic antidepressants
• Antiepileptic drugs
General Classes of Medications

Mood Stabilizers

• Lithium

• Antiepileptic Drugs
General Classes of Medications

Antipsychotics

- Zyprexa
- Risperidone
- Seroquel
- Geodon
- Haldol
- Mellaril/Thorazine
General Classes of Medications

Sedative – Hypnotics

- Restoril
- Ambien
- Trazodone
- Benadryl
- Chloral hydrate
- Ativan
Factors Affecting Dosage and Administration

- Age
- Medical conditions
- Amount of time the body takes to metabolize the drug
- Route
- Hydration
Factors Affecting Time of Administration

- Minimize side effects
- PRN medications
- Maintain therapeutic levels
- “Windows”
- Absorption
Factors Affecting Time of Administration

Minimize Side Effects

- Take after meals or with food to decrease stomach upset
- Take at night if it causes drowsiness
- Take in the morning if it causes inability to sleep
Factors Affecting Time of Administration

PRN Medications

• **Efficacy**: speed of onset, duration

• **Classes of drugs**
  - Pain control
  - Constipation
  - Nausea/Vomiting
  - Allergies
  - Status Epilepticus
Factors Affecting Time of Administration

Maintain Therapeutic Levels
- Metabolism of the drug
- Antibiotics/Antifungal
- Multiple doses vs. once a day dosing
Factors Affecting Time of Administration

“Window” of time
- Usually one hour before, to one hour after, the medication is ordered to be given
- Likelihood of decrease in therapeutic levels if given outside of these times
Factors Affecting Time of Administration

Absorption

- Routes of administration are not therapeutically interchangeable (e.g. Valium is easily absorbed orally but slower and erratic when given IM)

- Absorption can be slower when taken with food, milk or milk products

- The elderly have more difficulty absorbing medications D/T a decrease in GI acid secretions and slower motility thru the GI tract
Potential Implications of Missed Doses

- Compliance Issues
- Liability Issues
- Need to maintain therapeutic levels
Side Effects of Medications

- Dry Mouth
- Skin Reactions
- Blood Abnormalities
- CNS Disturbances
- GI Upset
- Difficulty Urinating
- Liver Involvement
Side Effects of Medications

- Changes in Blood Pressure
- Weight Gain or Loss
- Addiction
- Tremors
- Water Intoxication
- Prolonged Seizures
- Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome
Side Effects of Medications

Involuntary Movements
- Akathisia
- Acute Dystonia
- Extrapyramidal Symptoms
- Tardive Dyskinesia
Conclusions

• Psychotropic medications should be used to improve an individual’s functioning and quality of life.

• Medications should be used in conjunction with other therapies.
Conclusions

• “Start low and go slow”.

• Monitor regularly for side effects and need for usage.

• Don’t continue to administer unneeded drugs (“first do no harm”).
Psychoactive Medications

Sources for questions:

• Continuum of Care  
  http://star.nm.org/coc

• WebMD  www.webmd.com

• IntelliHealth  www.intellihealth.com

• MedicineNet  http://www.medicinenet.com

• Others?....