

Appropriate Use of Antipsychotics (AUA) Project in Long Term Care Sleep and Responsive Behaviours

As part of our facility's participation in the Appropriate Use of Antipsychotic Project, we will be looking at ways to improve the sleep of residents. People with dementia often have trouble sleeping. Getting a good night sleep in a long term care (LTC) facility can also be a challenge. Noise, light and staff routines interrupt sleep at night. In the day, natural sleep/wake cycles are disrupted by inactivity and dim lighting.

Poor sleep can result in foggy thinking and agitation, which can lead to use of antipsychotics and other medications.

Evening antipsychotics and sleeping pills are not usually helpful. Research does not support long term use of sleeping pills in the elderly. Sleeping pills interfere with important stages of sleep and cause daytime grogginess, falls and many other side effects.

“Older adults using hypnotics [sleeping pills] may experience decreased total sleep time, an increase in early morning awakening, an increase in daytime lethargy and report reduced sleep quality.” Koch 2006

Over the next few months we will:

- Assess individual residents to discover what interferes with their sleep, including drug and medical causes of insomnia
- Work with families, staff, prescribers and pharmacists to improve sleep for residents
- Address unit routines, light and noise on all shifts to better support sleep
- Cautiously decrease use of evening antipsychotics and sleeping pills

Keep an eye on our QI board for updates and information, and don't hesitate to offer ideas and suggestions. For more information on sedatives and seniors, see:

- Choosing Wisely Canada: [Insomnia and Anxiety in older people: Sleeping pills are usually not the best solution](#)
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta: [Sedative hypnotics and risk for adverse events](#)
- Rx Files: [Sleep Disorders: Sedatives](#) and [Chronic Insomnia in Older Adults Q & A Summary](#)

Koch S, Haesler E, Tiziani A, Wilson J, Effectiveness of sleep management strategies for residents of aged care facilities: findings of a systematic review. Journal of Clinical Nursing 2006 15, 1267- 1275.