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SPA PCP Treatment & Referral Guideline
Managing Depression in Older Adults

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I. Unique Needs in Older Adults.....Page 1

II. Medications for Depression in Older AdultsPage 2

III. Geriatric Depression Screen (GDS).....Page 4

I. Unique Needs in Older Adults

- A) Keep the GDS (attached) on file to screen and keep a high index of suspicion as older patients tend to under report psychiatric symptoms and manifest their illness with a somatic presentation.
- B) Patients who continue to present with vague complaints and frequent calls, often have undetected depression.
- C) Older adults
 - a) 15% of older adults with major depression attempt suicide.
 - b) Are sensitive to side effects of CNS meds. start low (50%), go slow
 - c) Often do not comply with medications; ask about meds often
 - d) In older adults depression often presents medically
 - e) Helpful to ask a family member/caregiver about symptoms, functioning and compliance to treatment.
 - f) Family member and caregivers also need support and education
 - g) Late onset depressive disorder usually predicts a prolonged course of the illness.
 - h) Most often present a mixed presentation: anxious, nervous, irritable, and depressed.
- D) Medications caution points.
 - a) Start at 50% of the normal adult dose and monitor regularly.
 - b) Avoid Benzodiazepines.
 - c) Avoid anticholinergic meds. orthostatic blood pressure, falls, and confusion.
 - d) Caution: Inderal (& all non-selective Beta Blockers), Clonidine, opiates.

II. Medications for Depression in Older Adults.

- A) First Line – Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI's), Safe in regards to overdose; 6-8% Syndrome of Inappropriate Antidiuretic Hormone (SIADH) – watch Na
 - a) Paroxetine (generic) - Paxil (brand)– broad spectrum depression and anxiety
 - 1) 5-10mg po qd to 10-20mg
 - b) Fluoxetine (generic) - Prozac (brand) – long half life
 - 1) 10mg po qAM – 20mg qAM
 - c) Sertraline (brand) - Zoloft (brand)
 - 1) 50mg po BID – 100mg BID
 - d) Citalopram (generic) - Celexa (brand)
 - 1) 10mg po qAM – 20mg po qAM
 - e) Escitalopram (generic) – Lexapro (brand)
 - 1) 10mg po qAM
- B) Second Line
 - a) Bupropion (generic) - Wellbutrin (brand)
 - 1) 75mg po BID – 150mg po BID
 - 2) SR 100mg po BID; 150 po BID
 - 3) XL 150mg po qAM
 - 4) Caution if Hypertension
 - 5) More activating, do not give past 5 p.m.
 - b) Venlafaxine (generic) - Effexor (brand) (monitor BP and P)

- 1) Effexor 37 ½ mg po BID – 50mg po BID – 100mg po BID
- 2) Effexor XR 37 ½ mg po BID – 75mg po BID

C) Third Line

- a) TCA's: Problems: Drowsiness, anticholinergic, orthostasis
 - 1) Desipramine (generic) – Norpramin (brand)
 - 2) 50mg qHS – 100mg qHS
- b) Nortriptyline (generic) – Pamelor (brand)
 - 1) 25mg qHS – 50mg qHS
- c) Mirtazapine (generic) - Remeron (brand)– less GI side effects but sedating
 - 1) 15mg po qHS; 30mg; 45mg
- d) Nefazodone (generic) - Serzone (brand) – Potential for Hepatic Failure. **FDA Black Box Warning**
 - 1) **Do not** initiate if active hepatic failure or elevated serum transaminases.
 - 2) Always obtain baseline liver functions prior to initiation of treatment and monitor liver functions during treatment.
 - 3) Dosing: 100mg po qHS – 200mg po qHS

III. Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS)

A) GERIATRIC DEPRESSION SCALE (GDS) SHORT FORM

(From: Yesavage JA. Geriatric depression scale. *Psychopharm Bull.* 1988; 24:709-711).

See the following page.

GERIATRIC DEPRESSION SCALE (GDS) SHORT FORM

Choose the best answer for how you (or the patient) felt the past week.
Check the appropriate box and score.


1. Are you basically satisfied with your life?
YES (0)____ **NO** (1)____
2. Have you dropped many of your activities and interests?
YES (1)____ **NO** (0)____
3. Do you feel that your life is empty?
YES (1)____ **NO** (0)____
4. Do you often get bored?
YES (1)____ **NO** (0)____
5. Are you in good spirits most of the time?
YES (0)____ **NO** (1)____
6. Are you afraid that something bad will happen to you?
YES (1)____ **NO** (0)____
7. Do you feel happy most of the time?
YES (0)____ **NO** (1)____
8. Do you often feel helpless?
YES (1)____ **NO** (0)____
9. Do you prefer to stay at home rather than going out and doing new things?
YES (1)____ **NO** (0)____
10. Do you feel you have more problems with memory than most other people?
YES (1)____ **NO** (0)____
11. Do you think it's wonderful to be alive now?
YES (0)____ **NO** (1)____
12. Do you feel pretty worthless the way you are now?
YES (1)____ **NO** (0)____
13. Do you feel full of energy?
YES (0)____ **NO** (1)____
14. Do you feel that your situation is hopeless?
YES (1)____ **NO** (0)____
15. Do you think that most people are better off than you?
YES (1)____ **NO** (0)____

Total Score: _____


TOTAL SCORE OF 5 OR MORE POINTS INDICATES PROBABLE DEPRESSION

Note: the nursing staff to evaluate a resident for can use this assessment scale depression.

APPROVAL:



SMF / SPA Medical Director



Behavioral Health Medical Director

January 26, 2009 _____
Date

January 26, 2009 _____
Date

Revision / Approval Summary:

SMF QM Committee
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