

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

How do you feel when you haven't slept well? Irritable, foggy, anxious, depressed...? Imagine what it would be like to sleep poorly for years.

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, there's too much sitting and napping; too little activity and light.

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



“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

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.

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 our residents. Over the next few months we will:

- Assess individual residents to discover what interferes with their sleep
- 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.