

Improving the Management of Patients with Severe Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD) in Victorian Hospitals

Pharmacological Management of Dementia and BPSD

#5 in a series of 10 project summaries

Context

The rate of dementia rises quickly with age. Given Australia's ageing population, the number of older people diagnosed with dementia is a significant and growing issue for health and aged care services. In response to concerns regarding the capacity of Victorian health services to provide best care for older people with dementia who present to the emergency department (ED) and/or are admitted to hospital, the Victorian Department of Health (DH) commissioned the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) to undertake a comprehensive review of the extent, impact and current management of this patient population. Of particular interest were patients who demonstrate behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD), a range of neuropsychiatric disturbances common among people with dementia, which are often initiated and/or exacerbated by the hospital environment.

Project Activities

This component of the larger project aimed to explore the current pharmacological management of dementia and BPSD in Victorian hospitals.

1. Retrospective Medical Record Audit



Retrospective medical record audit of patients aged 50+ years with an assigned dementia clinical code who had been discharged following an inpatient admission at 9 Victorian health services:

- 274 discharged hospital inpatients
- 84 primary diagnoses on admission
- 15 clinical units involved in care

2. Benchmarking Survey



Staff reported current models of care and management strategies for inpatients with dementia, including those with BPSD, across Victorian health services:

- 104 responses analysed
- 18 different clinical roles represented
- 13 different health services represented

Key Findings



Documented dementia-related medication use for inpatients with coded dementia as part of the retrospective medical record audit:

- Antipsychotics - 57% of patients
- Antidepressants - 34% of patients
- Sedatives - 34% of patients
- Cholinesterase Inhibitors - 16% of patients
- Melatonin - 9% of patients
- Memantine - 8% of patients
- Analgesics - 4% of patients



Antipsychotics

- 53% of inpatients in the audit received 2 or more different antipsychotics
- Quetiapine was the most common type used in the audit (30% of all patients)
- Staff reported use of anti-psychotics consistently high across all care settings



Sedatives

- 33% of inpatients in the audit received 2 or more different sedatives
- Oxazepam was the most common type used in the audit (19% of all patients)
- Staff reported use of sedatives highest in emergency and urgent care settings



Anti-Depressants

- Mirtazapine was the most common type of anti-depressant used in the audit (14% of all patients)
- Staff reported use of anti-depressants highest in subacute settings



Analgesics

- Buprenorphine patches were the most common type of analgesic used in the audit (2% of all patients)
- Staff reported use of analgesics consistently low across all care settings

NARI Contact:

Amy Parker
Senior Research Policy & Practice Fellow
Division of Clinical Gerontology
a.parker@nari.edu.au



Major Collaborations:



Publication Date: 2024