Use of First-Line Psychosocial Care for Children and Adolescents on Antipsychotics

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Although antipsychotic medications may serve as effective treatment for a narrowly defined set of psychiatric disorders in children, they are often being prescribed for nonpsychotic conditions such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and disruptive behaviors, conditions for which psychosocial interventions are considered first-line treatment.¹

Antipsychotic medications are associated with several potentially adverse impacts, including weight gain and diabetes.² The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have approved second-generation antipsychotic medications for schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, irritability associated with autistic disorder, and Tourette’s disorder among specific age groups.³ In some cases, antipsychotics may also be have limited use among youth to treat severe behavioral health problems and for short-term treatment of hyperactivity with excessive motor activity with accompanying conduct disorders.⁴

Before initiating any antipsychotic medication, it is recommended that the patient has received an adequate trial of first-line, evidence-based psychosocial therapy and other appropriate medications⁴.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

• Prior to beginning treatment with antipsychotics, refer your patients for psychosocial care to make sure that the medications are appropriate for the diagnosis.

Types of psychosocial treatments, include, but are not limited to:

• Psychotherapy (also known as talk therapy)
• Psychoeducation (teaches people about their condition and treatment options)
• Self-help and Support Groups (can address feelings of isolation and help people gain insight into their mental health condition)
• Psychosocial Rehabilitation (helps to learn coping skills to handle stressful situations)
• Assertive Community Treatment (team based treatment model)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:


¹Olfson, M; King, M; Schoenbaum, M: Treatment of Young Peoples with Antipsychotic Medications in the United States JAMA Psychiatry September 2015, Volume 72, Number 9 accessed 2/19/2020 @ https://jamanetwork.com/