

1-121 Anxiety-agitation choice of treatment

TIPS Question:

We have tried Haldol, Oxazepam, and Risperdal to decrease anxiety/agitation with verbal/physical aggression with little effect. We have found working around behaviours works better. What is the best drug for anxiety/agitation?

Response:

I wish I could tell you which drugs are most useful to use. It depends of course on the cause; selection can be assisted by identifying the vulnerabilities of the individual to various side effects to the different medications and staying away from those.

Some people believe that if a person presents with a certain cluster, one can select an initial trial of the drug, i.e. if there is psychosis present - an antipsychotic; if there is a depression/anxiety cluster - perhaps an SSRI; if there is episodic mood and behavioural disturbance and frontal lobe symptoms with a history of epilepsy - certainly a mood stabilizer might be considered; where there is apathy - cholinergic drugs have been found to be helpful.

To be honest, we do not have evidence as yet what drug to identify for what type of behaviour. However, the above guideline can be useful in terms of selection.

I would also consider reviewing the medication if you are going to use it using the STEPS - safety, tolerance, efficacy, price, simplicity, in your selection if indeed medication is warranted.

Please note: TIPS information should be used similar to the way you would use information from a text book! TIPS is not intended to serve as an individual consultation service! P.I.E.C.E.S. participants should use this information in context and always work closely with the family physician involved in the care of the resident or client and with other Partners In Care to find solutions to individual resident/client issues.