1-137 Cholinergics when – where A

TIPS Question:

Many people are now admitted to nursing homes well established on Aricept, (or another cognitive enhancement drug). What criteria are we promoting when deciding if/when these drugs should be discontinued?

Response:

This is a very controversial issue. Until recently the evidence for efficacy of the cognitive enhancers (e.g. Aricept, Exelon, Reminyl) was from studies of patients with mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease (a Mini-Mental State score of 10 to 26) Therefore some clinicians would discontinue the medication if the MMSE score dropped below 10. Please note that in Ontario, ODB will only cover the cost if the MMSE is 10 to 26. There is growing evidence that these drugs may offer equal benefit to patients with more severe dementia (please see abstract below).

There is also evidence that these drugs may improve behaviour and that they may also be helpful for patients with vascular dementia or Dementia with Lewy bodies.

As a result of the growing evidence some clinicians are reluctant to stop the medication. If the drug is stopped it should be tapered slowly and the patient should be carefully followed for possible deterioration.

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.*