3-37 Cognitive Enhancer - at what stage of dementia

TIPS Question:

Cognitive enhancers – when is it necessary to remove a resident from it?

- How early can it be started? When is it too late to put someone on it?
- What does a resident have to score on a MMSE to be eligible for cognitive enhancers?

What are the significant factors you have learned as a result of working through the six-question template?

- Different types of assessment tools to assess client's cognitive status
- How to assess at risk clients and determine the urgency of their behaviour

Response:

Very good questions! These really represent questions that are at the forefront of present research.

1. How early can it be started?

   Cholinergics are indicated for use in early dementia, i.e., as soon as the diagnosis is made. The question that is being asked recently and is the focus of present research studies is, "should it be used in what is called "minimum cognitive impairment" (MCI), i.e., when the individual on psychological testing is showing deficits, maybe complaining of memory but has no deficits in terms of function or activities of daily living.

   Some experts are promoting the use of cholinergics in MCI, and some are not. Research will, hopefully, give us the answer to this question. It should be noted that approximately 10-15% of people with MCI in one year become demented.

2. When is it too late?

   Again, this is unclear at present; however it is now being shown that in moderately severely demented individuals, they can and will respond to cholinergics.

   In my particular practice, I look at examining the benefits across the ABCDE areas that are potential benefits for cholinergics, i.e, a) abilities; b) behaviour problems; c) cognition; d) decrease in caregiver time; and e) extending a person's ability to remain in the community or least restrictive environment, against the side effects, i.e., remember MIND and MINDFULL. Common side effects of cholinergics are muscle cramps, insomnia, nausea, and diarrhea and MINDFULL, one has to be cautious about vulnerability to seizures, cardiac difficulties, asthma, as well as ulcers. I refer you back to the psychotropics section of the P.I.E.C.E.S. resource manual.

3. What does a resident have to score to be eligible for cognitive enhancers?

   In Ontario, Canada, to be eligible for funding one needs to score between 10 and 24.

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.*