3-47 Cognitive enhancer - moderate to severe dementia

TIPS Question:

When a resident is on Aricept and is severely cognitively impaired, should the resident be taken off of the drug or does it still have some benefit?

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

- Better understanding or identifying triggers
- Able to see the whole picture
- Educating the staff
- Identifying all the tools & putting them to use

Response:

Aricept and other cholinesterase inhibitors are indicated in mild to moderate stages of Alzheimer Disease with MMSE score between 10-24. If indicated and was indeed slowing down the disease process, individuals tend to take it for long time (probably for ever) so long that there was no precipitous decline or the person is not losing more than 2-3 points on MMSE score annually. They are unlikely to cause problems if used for long time or when the disease is in its advanced stages.

Recent studies by Feldman suggested that individuals in advanced stages of the disease might benefit from the drugs; it appears in later stages to improve the behaviour aspects of the disease more than the cognitive aspects at this point.

I therefore suggest discussing the matter with the individual's family to gain added insight as to his\her level of awareness and interaction during their visit (if there are family involved) and share your thoughts of continuing vs. discontinuing the drug.

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.*