What is the CT Partnership to Improve Dementia Care?

A group of healthcare professionals from different settings who come together in Connecticut to support the national initiative of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to offer quality dementia care in nursing homes and to reduce the use of antipsychotic medications in people living with dementia.

The Partnership to Improve Dementia Care encourages improved quality of life and person-centered care planning for people living with dementia in Connecticut nursing homes. One of our goals is to reduce or avoid the use of antipsychotic medications to treat the symptoms of dementia when they are not needed for the overall care plan.

The Partnership encourages caregivers to understand the behaviors and symptoms of dementia and to think about other ways to meet the needs of the person living with dementia. Examples may include putting consistent staff assignments in place, increasing exercise and time outdoors, managing pain and planning meaningful leisure activities.

We encourage you to read this information to learn more about how you can work with your care team to reduce or avoid the use of antipsychotic medications in dementia care.

For more information, visit www.HealthCareForNewEngland.org

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What are antipsychotic medications and why is this partnership important?

Antipsychotic medications are used to treat disorders like Schizophrenia, which includes symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions, agitation or anxiety. Some people with dementia experience these symptoms. In the past, antipsychotic medications have been used to treat these symptoms, but we now know that these medications can have side effects and are not always the best option for people with dementia. Therefore, the partnership is working to prevent the use of antipsychotic medications and to improve dementia care by carefully monitoring and reducing antipsychotic medications while using non-pharmacological approaches to improve dementia care.

What is being done to prevent the use of antipsychotic medications?

The partnership is working with nursing home staff, providers, and other caregivers to improve dementia care by carefully monitoring and reducing antipsychotic medications while using non-pharmacological approaches to improve dementia care. The goal is to lower and stop these medications where possible, while also ensuring that residents have access to non-medication approaches to improve their care.

What are the rights of the residents?

Residents have the right to be informed about the proper use as well as the side effects of any medications they are taking. After being educated, the resident or legally authorized representative has the right to refuse or legally authorize the use of medication. The resident is also entitled to receive care that is tailored to their specific needs and preferences.

What you can do:

It is important to stay involved in your loved one’s care. Attend meetings and be an active partner in your loved one’s care. It is important to stay informed by asking questions such as:

- What type of medication is my loved one on?
- What are the reasons for prescribing this medication?
- What are the potential side effects and benefits of this medication?
- How does this medication help my loved one?
- Is there a plan to lower and stop this medication?
- Is there any non-pharmacological approach that could be used to improve care?

You can be extremely helpful by providing important information about your loved one to the nursing home staff and other medical providers. Information such as:

- Lifelong patterns, likes, and dislikes
- Interests for daily and leisure activities
- Musical preferences
- Eating preferences
- Sleeping patterns
- What brings them comfort
- What brings them distress
- The different ways your loved one shows emotions
- What brings them comfort

Living with dementia:

Living with dementia, it is vital to stay in touch with your loved one. Understanding their preferences and needs can help you provide better care. It is also important to stay informed about the proper use and side effects of any medications they are taking. Antipsychotic medications are used to treat disorders like Schizophrenia, which includes symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions, agitation or anxiety. Some people with dementia experience these symptoms, and the use of antipsychotic medications has been shown to be effective in treating these symptoms. However, it is important to stay vigilant and monitor for any side effects or changes in behavior that may indicate a need for a medication review.