QUALITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE MONITORING FOR METABOLIC SYNDROME FOR MEMBERS TAKING ANTI-PSYCHOTIC MEDICATIONS

Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of features (hypertension, central obesity, glucose intolerance/insulin resistance and dyslipidemia) that is predictive of both Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Such features are prevalent in people who are receiving antipsychotic medication. The precise relationship between antipsychotic drugs, glucose homeostasis, obesity, and the metabolic syndrome remains uncertain, but it is clear that people treated with antipsychotic medication have a high rate of the individual features of the metabolic syndrome and the syndrome itself. (Schizophrenia Bulletin vol. 33, no 6, pp.397-1403.) In addition to antipsychotic medication, the negative symptoms of mental illness and vulnerability to stress, specifically in schizophrenia, lead to a lifestyle that increases the risk for development of metabolic syndrome. (DeHert, et.al, 1999).

Studies suggest that screening for metabolic syndrome in people prescribed antipsychotic medication are below the recommended screening rates. Considerable evidence indicates that mentally ill patients often do not receive adequate recognition, monitoring or care for their medical illnesses. This negatively impacts quality of life and contributes to premature death.

Reviews of the association between psychotic disorder, metabolic syndrome, diabetes and antipsychotic drugs conclude that there is a critical need for active, routine physical health screening of patients’ prescribed antipsychotic drugs. The screening should include appropriate management of metabolic adverse events associated with psychiatric medications.

Baseline monitoring measures should be obtained before (or as soon as clinically feasible) the initiation of any antipsychotic medication:
  • Personal and family history of obesity, diabetes, dyslipidemia, hypertension or cardiovascular disease
  • Height and weight
  • BMI calculation (Weight in Pounds/(Height in inches x Height in inches) ) x 703
  • Waist circumference (at umbilicus)
  • Blood pressure
  • Fasting plasma glucose
  • Fasting lipid profile

Ongoing monitoring and recommendations include:
  • Baseline screening and regular monitoring for metabolic syndrome
  • Consideration of metabolic risks when starting second generation antipsychotic medication
  • Patient, family and caregiver education
  • Referral to specialized services when appropriate
  • Discussion of medication changes with patient and family