

The use of psychotropic medication in Canada – what you told the National Coalition on Dual Diagnosis Summary results, March 2010

In late December 2009 we asked for your assistance in identifying the existence of Canadian guidelines, research or specialist training on the use of medication to manage problem behaviours in persons with developmental/intellectual disabilities. The information was to assist Dr. Elspeth Bradley in preparing a report for a special edition in 2010 of the Journal, *Advances in Mental Health and Learning (Developmental) Disabilities*, on the use of psychotropic medication for the management of problem behaviours among adults with developmental disabilities.

Dr. Bradley approached the *National Coalition on Dual Diagnosis* to assist in gathering information because of the infrastructure this coalition provides across Canada linking stakeholders interested and concerned about services for people with dual diagnosis, many of whom are likely to be, or have been, on psychotropic medication .

We are delighted to report that a total of 31 responses were received from 6 provinces!
The break down as follows:

Alberta: 1	Nova Scotia: 2
British Columbia: 6	Ontario: 19
New Brunswick: 1	Quebec: 2

While most responses reported the absence of formal policies or guidelines in these regards, across the country local initiatives were identified that speak both to concerns by members of the Coalition about medication use as well as efforts to establish some informal approaches to these concerns using available information and existing resources. This feedback, summarized below, from Coalition members is in of itself a resource as through the network of the Coalition it can be shared across the country. Thank you everyone!

Qualitatively, all respondents agreed that this was a gap within the Canadian context. Most respondents were also quite cognizant of the issues specific to this population:

- Inappropriate, inadequate or excessive medication
- Lack of specialized training for physicians regarding the prescribing of medications
- Lack of specialized training for support workers regarding the use, monitoring and in particular understanding of psychotropic medications
- Lack of coordinated plan regarding use of medications and regular reviews
- Awareness of management of side effects

- Use of medication as more immediate / “easier” / intervention rather than needed attention to environment and supports
- Tendency to use antipsychotics as first line pharmacology intervention rather than other medications perhaps more suited to the etiology of the behaviours, e.g., anti-anxiety medications

Below are Canadian resources identified by Coalition members that may be helpful when considering medication for the management of problem behaviours in adults with developmental (intellectual) disabilities:

1. *Consensus guidelines for primary health care of adults with developmental disabilities*. Sullivan, W.F., Heng, J., Cameron, D., Lunskey, Y., Cheetham, T., Hennen, B., Bradley, E., A., Berg, J. M., Korossy, M., Forster-Gibson, C., Gitta, M., Stavrakaki, C., McCreary, B., Swift, I. *Can Family Physician* 2006;52:1410-1418. See Behavioural and Mental Health Guidelines 18 – 24
2. *Guidelines for Managing the Client with Intellectual Disability in the Emergency Room* . Bradley, E., Burke, L., Drummond, C., Korossy, M., Lunskey, Y., Morris, S. Refer to section on medications Available at:
http://www.camh.net/Publications/Resources_for_Professionals/guidelines_manageclient_emerg2003.pdf
3. *Planning guidelines for mental health and addiction services for children, youth and adults with developmental disability*. (2007) Byrne, C., Hurley, A.D., James, R. See: Appendix B: Psychotropic Drug Therapy Guidelines for the Treatment of People with Developmental Disabilities Available at:
<http://www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/mhd>
4. Alberta Council of Disability Services Creating Excellence Together (CET) Accreditation Level 1 Standards. Refer to specifically to standards 30 – 32 and 36 regarding monitoring of medication and restraint. Available at:
http://www.acds.ca/PDFS/CET%20Level%201%20and%202/CET_Level_1_Stnds_2008.pdf

Some respondents also referred to existing international resources specific to the field to assist with decision making:

5. Expert Consensus Guideline Series: Treatment of psychiatric and behavioral problems in mental retardation. (2000) *American Journal of Mental Retardation* : *AJMR*, **105** (3) 159-226.
6. *International guide to prescribing psychotropic medication for the management of problem behaviours in adults with intellectual disabilities*. Deb, S., Kwok, H., Bertelli, M., Salvador-Carulla, L., Bradley, E., Torr, J., Barnhill, J, For the Guideline Development Group of the WPA Section on Psychiatry of Intellectual Disability. October, 2009 Vol. 8 No. 3 pp. 181 – 186. Available at:

<http://docs.google.com/fileview?id=0B7cfOvLWoXJJNDExNGZkODItNzUyMC00MjZkLTg5NGYtZTI3ZjczMzRjNTAw&hl=en>

General resources;

7. Compendium of Pharmaceuticals and Specialties 2010 (CPS) English
Editor-in-Chief Carol Repchinsky, BSP For
information:http://www.pharmacists.ca/content/products/ecps_english.cfm
8. Guide to drugs in Canada **Editor-in-Chief** Lalitha Raman-Wilms, PharmD.
Canadian Pharmacists Association. For information:
http://www.pharmacists.ca/content/products/drug_guide_canada.cfm

Journal articles:

Risperidone, haloperidol, and placebo in the treatment of aggressive challenging behaviour in patients with intellectual disability: a randomised controlled trial. Peter Tyrer, Patricia C Oliver-Africano, Zed Ahmed, Nick Bouras, Sherva Cooray, Shoumitro Deb, Declan Murphy, Monica Hare, Michael Meade, Ben Reece, Kofi Kramo, Sabyasachi Bhaumik, David Harley, Adrienne Regan, David Thomas, Bharti Rao, Bernard North, Joseph Eliahoo, Shamshad Karatela, Anju Soni, Mike Crawford.
www.thelancet.com Vol. 371 January 5, 2008

Learning disability in the accident and emergency department. E. Bradley and J. Lofchy
Advances in Psychiatric Treatment (2005), Vol. 11, 45–57

The Use of Psychotropic Drugs in Autism and Other Pervasive Developmental Disorders.
Lukas Propper and Herbert Orlik DOI: 10.1542/peds.2008-3782 Pediatrics
2009;124;1533-1540

Aripiprazole in the Treatment of Irritability in Children and Adolescents With Autistic Disorder. Manos, Robert D. McQuade, William H. Carson and Robert L. Findling
Randall Owen, Linmarie Sikich, Ronald N. Marcus, Patricia Corey-Lisle, George
Pediatrics 2009;124;1533-1540

Pilot study on the use of psychotropic medication in persons with mental retardation.
Radouco-Thomas M, Bolduc M, Brisson A, Brassard P, Fortier L & Thivierge J. Progress
in Neuro-Psychopharmacology and Biological Psychiatry, 2004. **28** (5) 879-83.

*Trends in Psychotropic Drug Use Among Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities
Accessing Outpatient Services.* Alexandra Kirvan and Yona Lunsky, Unpublished

*Formal versus informal interventions for challenging behaviour in persons with
intellectual disabilities.* Feldman M.A., Atkinson L., Foti-Gervais L., & Condillac
R. (2004). *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research : JIDR*, **48** (1) 60-8.

Atypical antipsychotic use in treating adolescents and young adults with developmental disabilities Friedlander R, Lazar S & Klancnik J (2001). Canadian Journal of Psychiatry. Revue Canadienne De Psychiatrie, **46** (8) 741-5.

Thank you all for your input!