

Module 2:

Increasing Use of Psychotropics: Public Health Concerns

Learning Goals

1. Discuss recent trends in the prescription of stimulant, antidepressant, antipsychotic, and anticonvulsant medications to children and adolescents
2. Identify gaps between empirically-based evidence and current practices revealed in epidemiological studies of prescription patterns
3. Articulate experts' concerns about the use of off-label medications and polypharmacy
4. Articulate rationale for using off-label medications
5. Explain special concerns about prescriptions to specific populations such as pre-schoolers and youth in foster care
6. Describe behavioral toxicity of psychotropic medications

Questions for Practice, Supervision and Administration

1. Review the prescription trends outlined in this module.
 - a. To what extent are similar patterns reflected in your cases?
2. Describe any specific steps you or your colleagues have taken to counteract this trend in one or more of your cases?
3. Of your clients on psychotropic medication,
 - a. How many are receiving more than one drug? How many are receiving more than one drug from the same class? What is the rationale? Attempt to locate and review research or clinical publications describing short and long-term outcomes of similar medication regimen as some of your clients.
 - b. In your medicated clients, have you searched for, or observed signs of behavioral toxicity? Discuss with your colleagues any advantages and limitations of the method you used to discover, observe, or confirm the presence of behavioral toxicity. How was/is this toxicity managed, and with what specific results? What lessons for clinical practice might you conclude from these experiences?

- c. Distinguishing behavioral toxicity from the original presenting problem or disorder or its “natural evolution” is difficult. Using one of your clients as an example, discuss a recent clinical worsening or exacerbation or relapse, and list your reasoning for *excluding* this as an instance of behavioral toxicity. Locate a publication (article, textbook or handbook) that discusses how to distinguish between behavioral toxicity and “natural” exacerbation, and summarize them for your colleagues.
- d. Attempt to locate research or clinical publications that argue for and against polypharmacy, and summarize their respective arguments.