TITLE: Short-acting Benzodiazepines versus other Strategies for the Management of Agitation in Older Patients: Clinical Effectiveness and Guidelines

DATE: 28 June 2010

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What is the clinical effectiveness of short-acting benzodiazepines compared to other strategies for the management of agitation in elderly patients?

2. What are the guidelines for the administration of short-acting benzodiazepines for managing agitation in elderly patients?

METHODS:

A limited literature search was conducted on key health technology assessment resources, including PubMed, the Cochrane Library (Issue 5, 2010), University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) databases, EuroScan, international health technology agencies, and a focused Internet search. The search was limited to English language articles published between January 1, 2005 and June 15, 2010. No filters were applied to the main search on the use of benzodiazepines for the management of agitation in the elderly. However, filters were used to limit retrieval to health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, safety data, and guidelines in a broader search on the use of benzodiazepines in elderly patients. Internet links were provided, where available.

RESULTS:

HTIS reports are organized so that the higher quality evidence is presented first. Therefore, health technology assessment reports, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses are presented first. These are followed by randomized controlled trials, non-randomized studies, and evidence-based guidelines.

One evidence-based guideline was identified in the literature search. No relevant health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials, or...
non-randomized studies were identified pertaining to short-acting benzodiazepines for the management of agitation in elderly patients. Additional potentially relevant articles are located in the appendix.

**OVERALL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:**

The NICE–SCIE guideline on support for people with dementia and their carers recommends that healthcare professionals need to: be proficient in their ability to correctly use benzodiazepines to control behaviour; be knowledgeable of the risks associated with their use (particularly in the physically ill and dehydrated); and understand their cardiovascular effects.\(^1\) These guidelines also underline the importance of dosage titration in patients with dementia. Once a benzodiazepine has been administered, health professionals should: be proficient in nursing patients who remain in the recovery position or are restrained (while consistently monitoring their vital signs); be skilled in resuscitation and in the use of resuscitation equipment; and understand the urgency to keep the airway unobstructed.\(^1\)

There was no information available on the clinical effectiveness of short-acting benzodiazepines compared to other strategies for the management of agitation in elderly patients.
REFERENCES SUMMARIZED:

Health technology assessments
No literature identified.

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses
No literature identified.

Randomized controlled trials
No literature identified.

Non-randomized studies
No literature identified.

Guidelines and recommendations

   Note: See 1.7.3 Behaviour that challenges requiring urgent treatment

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APPENDIX – FURTHER INFORMATION:

Systematic reviews


Randomized controlled trials


Clinical practice guidelines

   Note: See 2 Agitation management, page 18


   Note: See Treatments for psychosis and agitation, page 30

   Note: See Pharmacological interventions: management of behavioural disturbances, page 67

Review articles

Additional references