

Psychiatric Medications 101: A brief guide for law enforcement working with mentally ill



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify which medications are used for which disorders
- Address major side effects and important information about different drug classes
- Discuss medications concerns that may be pertinent to law enforcement personnel

Case 1

- Police were called because a 51 y.o. female is in a neighbor's yard yelling
- She appears disheveled, malodorous, and is talking to herself
- She tells you that she gets services at Arlington County, and that she missed her shot last month.

Common disorders for which medications are prescribed

- Bipolar disorder
- Major depressive disorder
- Psychotic disorders (schizophrenia, schizoaffective)
- Anxiety disorders (e.g. generalized anxiety, social anxiety)
- Tic disorders
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Impulse control disorders

Individuals with bipolar disorder may be prescribed:

- Neuroleptics/antipsychotics
- Mood stabilizers (e.g. Lithium, Depakote)
- Antidepressants

Disorders that have many comorbid psychiatric illnesses requiring medications

- Personality disorders (e.g. borderline personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder)
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Substance abuse and dependence

Medications commonly prescribed for different conditions

- Bipolar disorder
 - Mood stabilizers
 - Neuroleptics/antipsychotics
 - Antidepressants
- Major depression
 - Antidepressants
 - Antipsychotics and mood stabilizers as adjuncts
- Anxiety
 - Antidepressants
 - Benzodiazepines

Medications commonly prescribed for different conditions

- Psychotic disorders
 - Antipsychotics
 - Antidepressants/mood stabilizers (because mood disorders frequently occur with psychotic disorders)
- Post traumatic symptoms
 - Antidepressants
 - Antipsychotics

Antipsychotics are used to treat

- Psychosis (schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder)
- Bipolar Disorder (can be used as mood stabilizers)
- Adjunctive (add-on treatment) for depression
- Often used to treat irritability or aggression, particularly in children
- Can be used for sleep problems

Antipsychotics – Some examples

- Haldol, Prolixin, Trilafon, Thorazine
- Geodon, Abilify, Seroquel, Zyprexa, Risperdal, Invega, Saphris, Clozaril

Antidepressants are used to treat

- Major Depressive Disorder
- Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Social Phobia
- Panic Disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

The SSRI's

- Fluoxetine (Prozac)
- Paroxetine (Paxil)
- Sertraline (Zoloft)
- Citalopram (Celexa)
- Escitalopram (Lexapro)
- Fluvoxamine (Luvox)
- Vilazodone (Viibryd)

The SNRI's

- Venlafaxine (Effexor)
- Duloxetine (Cymbalta)

Other Agents

- Bupropion (Wellbutrin)
- Mirtazapine (Remeron)
- Buspirone (BuSpar)

Mood Stabilizers are used to treat

- Bipolar Disorder (Manic Depression)
- Schizoaffective Disorder
- Seizures
- Aggression

Case 2

- A 52 y.o male with bipolar makes statements about being attracted to specific young girls
- The behavioral health clinic calls the police for assistance
- The psychiatrist works to optimize the mood stabilizing medication, as increase sexual urges can be part of mania
- The police assist in providing surveillance

Mood Stabilizers – some examples

- Lithium (Lithobid, Eskalith)
- Divalproex Sodium (Depakote, Depakene)
- Carbamazepine (Tegretol, Equetro)
- Oxcarbazepine (Trileptal)
- Lamotrigine (Lamictal)

Benzodiazepines are used to treat

- Panic Attacks/Panic Disorder
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Alcohol Withdrawal

Case 3

- The library asks for your help with a client who stays around the library for long hours.
- He appears to have unusual movement of his mouth
- Question:
 - What could these movements be?
 - Can they give you a clue about medications?

Benzodiazepines – some examples

Alprazolam (Xanax), Lorazepam (Ativan),
Chlordiazepoxide (Librium), Diazepam (Valium),
clonazepam (Klonopin)

Stimulants are used to treat

- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- Narcolepsy
- Amotivation or Depression, often in the elderly or post-stroke patients

Stimulants – some examples

- Methylphenidate (Ritalin, Concerta, Metadate, Methylin, Daytrana)
- Dextroamphetamine/Amphetamine Mixed Salts (Adderall)
- Lisdexamfetamine (Vyvanse)

Case 4

- You are called to someone's home because the neighbors complained about noise
- There appears to be a domestic dispute
- A female at the house reveals to you that she has just overdosed on her lithium and ativan

What do I have to worry about?

- Medical emergencies:
 - Serotonin syndrome (caused by SSRIs)
 - Neuroleptic malignant syndrome (caused by antipsychotics)
 - Dystonic reaction (caused by antipsychotics)
 - Overdose of medications

What are the worst medications in overdose?

- Lithium – Causes neurologic problems
- Tricyclic antidepressants (nortriptyline, amitriptyline, clomipramine) – Causes arrhythmias (a.k.a. the heart beats gets out of wack)
- Ativan, Valium, Klonopin (benzodiazepines) – Causes “decreased respiratory drive” (aka – the person doesn’t breathe)



WHEN IN DOUBT – GET MEDICAL
HELP!

Side effects that may be seen by law enforcement personnel

- Short term
 - Acute dystonic reaction (antipsychotics)
 - Sleepiness (many of the medications!)
 - Stiffness (antipsychotics)
 - Changes in walking and tremor (“Parkinsonian”)
 - Restlessness (called “akathesia”)
 - Dizziness
 - “Activation”
 - Many others
- Long term side effects
 - Weight gain, diabetes, high cholesterol
 - Tardive dyskinesia

Withdrawal

- Benzodiazepine withdrawal can be dangerous
 - Seizures, high blood pressure
 - Can be life threatening
- Withdrawal from opiates
 - “flu-like” symptoms
 - People can feel very sick, but it is NOT life-threatening
- Withdrawal from stimulants
 - Fatigue, constipation
 - NOT life threatening

Withdrawal

- Patients should work with a psychiatrist before stopping their medications
- Not having psychiatric medications can worsen psychiatric symptoms and can cause some uncomfortable physical symptoms
- It is usually not life-threatening with a few exceptions:
 - Benzodiazepines (seizures, elevated heart rate and BP)
 - Clonidine (can cause elevated blood pressure)

Remember

- Medications can save lives and have helped many people with mental illness live the lives they want for themselves
- Medications have specific risks and side effects



Questions?