

## Choosing Wisely

### Thirteen Things Physicians and Patients Should Question<sup>1</sup>

#### 12. Don't use antipsychotics as first choice to treat behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

People with dementia often exhibit challenging behavioural symptoms such as aggression and psychosis. In such instances, antipsychotic medicines may be necessary, but should be prescribed cautiously as they provide limited benefit and can cause serious harm, including premature death. Use of these drugs should be limited in dementia to cases where nonpharmacologic measures have failed, and where the symptoms either cause significant suffering, distress, and/or pose an imminent threat to the patient or others. A thorough assessment that includes identifying and addressing causes of behaviour change can make use of these medications unnecessary. Epidemiological studies suggest that typical (i.e., first generation) antipsychotics (i.e., haloperidol) are associated with at least the same risk of adverse events. This recommendation does not apply to the treatment of delirium or major mental illnesses such as mood disorders or schizophrenia.

#### Sources:

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<sup>1</sup>Choosing Wisely. 2017. Psychiatry – Thirteen Things Physicians and Patients Should Question. Available Online. <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/psychiatry/>.