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Decreasing the use of benzodiazepine and sedative hypnotics in post-operative older adults

PURPOSE

The purpose of this scholarly project was to decrease the prescribing of benzodiazepines and sedative hypnotics in postoperative older adults. The project took place in a single service line of a large academic hospital in Dallas Texas.

BACKGROUND

The project was implemented on a 24-bed medical surgical floor, where residents, attending physicians and advanced practice providers have prescribing privileges.

METHODOLOGY

Practice changes included monthly provider and nursing staff education in-services and transparent monitoring of provider prescribing practices. In addition, changes to the program were made using the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's Plan-Do-Study-Act quality improvement methodology.

RESULTS

Six months of data were monitored for a baseline measure of prescribing trends, and post implementation on the unit, there was a 33% decrease in the prescribing of benzodiazepines/sedative hypnotics and a

12% increase in the prescribing of melatonin. By the end of the project, there was also a 42% decrease in hours of patient safety sitter use, a marker for delirium incidence.

IMPLICATIONS

Expanding providers' and nursing staff knowledge proved to be an effective tool in changing prescribing patterns, leading to fewer hours spent utilizing patient safety sitters, thereby lowering healthcare costs while concurrently improving the quality of care delivered.

Future quality improvement projects should focus on additional ways to sustain these changes in prescribing patterns.