

Antipsychotic Medication Use in Long-term Care

A Focused Review of Select Skilled Nursing Facilities
to Evaluate the Utilization of Antipsychotic Medications Absent a Diagnosis of Schizophrenia

ABSTRACT

Inappropriate antipsychotic medication use among the elderly is a significant patient safety issue. This was the topic of a report from the Office of the Inspector General – *CMS Could Improve the Data It Uses To Monitor Antipsychotic Drugs in Nursing Homes* (published May 2021) – and a New York Times article – *Phony Diagnoses Hide High Rates of Drugging at Nursing Homes* (published September 2021).

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and Kepro collaborated to perform an in-depth review of focus studies and survey reports to take a closer look at skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) and determine if antipsychotic drugs are being appropriately and safely used for Medicare beneficiaries.

METHODOLOGY

A standardized review template was used for all reviews. The selected peer reviewers specialized in psychology or psychiatry.

PHASE 1

71

Number of cases CMS referred to the Beneficiary and Family Centered Care Quality Improvement Organizations (BFCC-QIOs) for focused reviews.

- CMS selected cases from facilities with the greatest number of potential cases.
- CMS applied the CMS Administrator's principles on health equity and selected cases that were diverse in terms of race, geography, and urban/rural of the Medicare beneficiaries involved. CMS referred 71 individual cases of potential inappropriate antipsychotic medication administration across 11 SNFs.

PHASE 1

93

Number of additional cases CMS referred to the BFCC-QIOs.

REVIEW CRITERIA

For each case, BFCC-QIOs were asked to:

- Confirm a documented diagnosis of dementia
- Summarize any mental health assessments, new psychiatric diagnoses, and major behavioral events
- Determine whether the Medicare beneficiary had a diagnosis of schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder, and if so, whether the diagnosis was supported by the medical record
- Analyze the use of antipsychotics, including dose adjustments and if their use was clinically supported
- Determine if the standard of care was met
- Determine whether non-pharmacological methods of addressing problematic behaviors were used before antipsychotics
- Determine whether appropriate efforts were made to monitor and taper the dosage of antipsychotic therapy

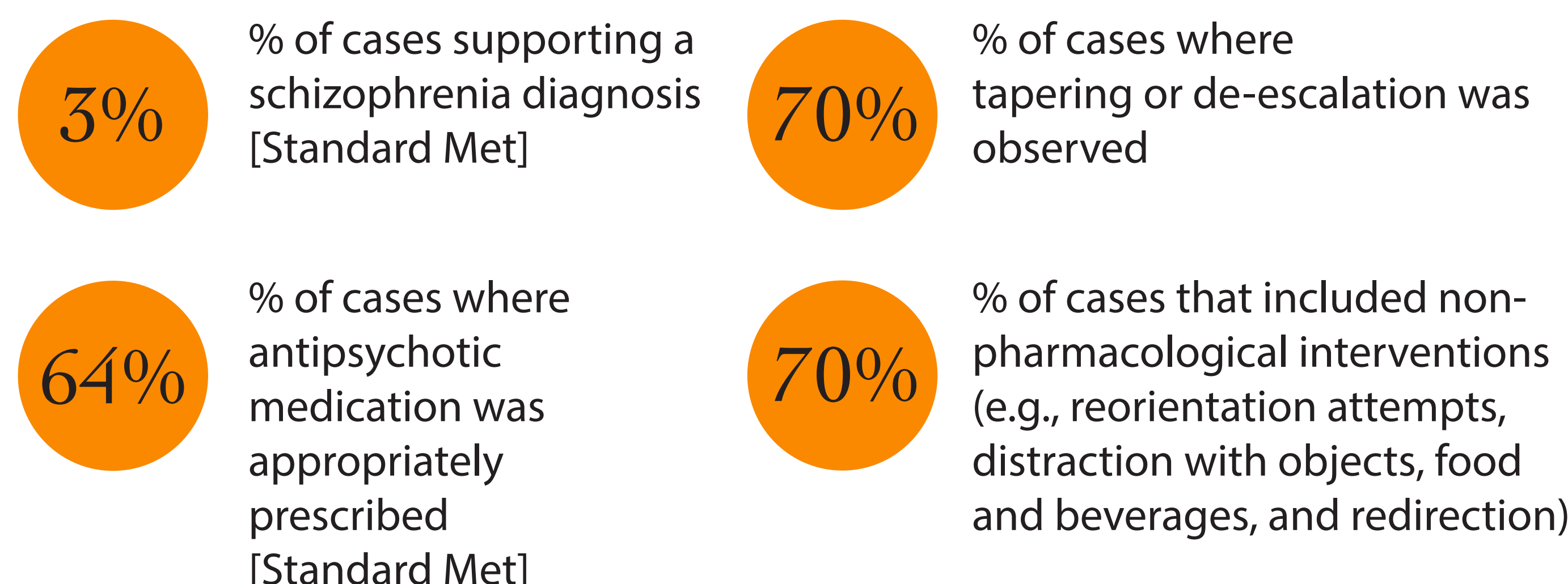
RESULTS

KEY ISSUES



- What symptoms prompted the use of antipsychotics?
- Were alternative treatments tried prior to the use of antipsychotics?
- Was tapering or de-escalation tried?
- Were residents monitored for potential adverse effects?

KEY STATISTICS



DISCUSSION



In under **50%** of cases, antipsychotic medications were inappropriately prescribed for behavioral disturbances in dementia patients.

Antipsychotic medications may increase mortality and are not approved for the treatment of behavioral disorders in patients with dementia by the US Food and Drug Administration.

In over **50%** of cases, antipsychotic medications were appropriately prescribed for behavioral disturbances in dementia patients.

Antipsychotic medications should not be routinely used to treat behavioral disturbances in dementia patients. However, their benefits often outweigh their risks for when treatment of psychotic symptoms is critical to patient and caregiver safety, well-being, and quality of life.



The policy addressing reported quality measures may need to be reviewed.

The quality measure that evaluates the prescribing of antipsychotic medications in dementia patients needs to go beyond determining if the medications were appropriately prescribed based on a schizophrenia diagnosis.

FOR MORE

Information for stakeholders, healthcare providers, and Medicare beneficiaries — including information about Kepro's podcast and newsletters — can be accessed by the QR code to the right or at this URL: www.keproqio.com/conference.



About Kepro: Kepro is the Beneficiary and Family Centered Care Quality Improvement Organization (BFCC-QIO) for 29 states. As a BFCC-QIO, Kepro helps people who are on Medicare - and their families and caregivers - to file quality of care complaints and hospital discharge and skilled service termination appeals. Kepro also offers Immediate Advocacy services to quickly resolve medical concerns. Visit www.keproqio.com/conference to learn more.

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