Substance Use among Older Adults with Prescription Psychotherapeutic Drug

An urgent need for early identification and treatment in the elderly

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Purpose
This study aimed to describe the prevalence of polysubstance use in older adults with prescription psychotherapeutic drugs.

Methods
Design: Cross-sectional design
Measures:
- Demographic questionnaire
- The Timeline Followback (TLFB)
  • A tool for assessing use of prescription drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and illicit substances by subjective report from participants
  • Can be used to assess the prevalence of addictive behaviors among participants

Data analysis: Descriptive statistics using SPSS 17.0

Setting:
- Adult day care, a geriatric primary clinic, and the geriatric evaluation and management clinic at Buffalo VA medical center
- Primary care clinic
- Pain management clinic
- Senior apartments and senior centers in Buffalo area

Eligibility Criteria
- Age: 50 or above
- Mini Mental Status Exam (MMSE) scores equal to or greater than 24
- Currently on at least one psychotherapeutic medication including opiates, anxiolytics, sedatives/hypnotics (treating chronic pain, sleep and anxiety)
- Be able to communicate in English

Results
Demographic characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Demographic Characteristics (N=96)</th>
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Limitations
- Cross sectional design limits generalizability of the study findings.
- There may be an underreport of substance use and medication misuse because of social desirability.
- Futures studies should investigate the effects of emotional distress (e.g., depression and anxiety) on polysubstance use and misuse among older adults.
- Next step of this study will be to identify risk factors of polysubstance use among older adults.

Bibliography