

1-100 Benzodiazepines

TIPS Question:

We use Ativan frequently (has been used as first med frequently) at our home for agitation, anxiety, and rest. I know that it is addictive and may have rebound effects. What would be a drug of choice for these common behaviours? If you have any info sheets on Ativan that I may post for the nurses and give to our physician, I would appreciate.

Response:

Ativan as you are aware is in the class of drugs called Benzodiazepines. Benzodiazepine major side effects are detailed in the psychotropic template and include:

- a) falls
- b) sedation
- c) may cause cognitive problems
- d) used over long term cause tolerance and withdrawal if discontinued.

Recent studies have noted that falls occur early ie. when first used, then for a period of 2-3 weeks fall rates appear to be similar to placebo. Then after 2-3 weeks the prevalence of falls increases again. So, it is important to monitor closely at the beginning and also later if used for longer periods.

In terms of your questions about its use for sleep, anxiety, and agitation, as we discussed during training, every medication should be a clinical trial, weighing benefits and side effects.

Sleep anxiety can be a result of many causes often multiple so consider P.I.E.C.E.S. triggers. After that it will be clearer what treatment to use and this may or may not be Ativan.

Since you have internet access, you will be also be able to find Ativan information at:

<http://www.mentalhealth.com/fr30.html>

Please note: TIPS information should be used similar to the way you would use information from a text book! TIPS is not intended to serve as an individual consultation service! P.I.E.C.E.S. participants should use this information in context and always work closely with the family physician involved in the care of the resident or client and with other Partners In Care to find solutions to individual resident/client issues.