

# BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS



2017

## Clinical Innovations for Specific Populations

North York Family Health Team

### A multidisciplinary approach to deprescribe sedative hypnotics in the elderly



Ten per cent of the more than 20,000 seniors in the North York Family Health Team's patient population have been prescribed a sedative hypnotic drug, so the team took to heart Choosing Wisely Canada's recommendation against the use of benzodiazepines and other sedative hypnotic medication (SH) in older adults as a first choice for insomnia, agitation or delirium.

Highly addictive sedative hypnotic drugs have side effects, making slips and falls and memory loss more likely. They're also associated with longer-term side effects, such as dementia.

Led by its pharmacy and social work teams, the FHT introduced a two-tiered insomnia reduction program

focusing on elderly patients. The first tier provides an individualized assessment, recommendations for weaning oneself from the drugs, plus a follow-up by a pharmacist. The second tier involves cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia as a support to reduce drug use, offering a dedicated group program facilitated by a social worker, pharmacist and dietician.

The program has been a success. Ninety-three per cent of first-tier patients, or 16, attempted to wean or stop SH use. Of these patients, 75 per cent successfully reduced their usage, while 20 per cent reached absolute abstinence. Among second-tier participants, 79 per cent reported an improvement in mood, and 71 per cent a reduction in anxiety. Eleven patients (79%) reported an improvement in sleep quality.

The team solicits qualitative feedback from participants on a regular basis.

Their input has resulted in changes, including:

- earlier introduction and accessibility to the pharmacist;
- integration of a registered dietitian to discuss strategies to deal with diet as a symptom of insomnia; and
- need for individual follow up counselling.

In addition, there's commitment to this quality goal on an organizational level: deprescribing measures have been integrated into NYFHT's quality improvement plan.

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This intervention is effective and addresses a clinically relevant patient care issue. It's easily generalizable and clearly demonstrates the impact that a primary care interdisciplinary team can have on a local population.

## Key Facts:

- 75% of patients successfully decreased usage
- 20% stopped altogether
- Deprescribing measures integrated into QI plan
- Easily generalizable
- Led by pharmacy and social work team
- Patients involved in design