

Learning Activity 4.1.

Psychotropic Medication Quiz

1. What is the mechanism of action by which antidepressant medications achieve the desired effect (regardless of the different physiological processes by which this action is accomplished)?

Antidepressants inhibit the reuptake of norepinephrine or serotonin at the presynaptic neuron.

2. For what must the nurse be on the alert with the client who is receiving antidepressant medication?

A nurse must be aware of any worsening depressive symptoms, suicidal thoughts, or serotonin syndrome.

3. As the nurse, when would you expect the client to begin showing signs of symptomatic relief after the initiation of antidepressant therapy?

It can take up to 4-6 weeks for symptomatic relief to be present.

4. Name an example of a tricyclic antidepressant **amitriptyline**.

Name an example of an MAOI **phenelzine**.

Name an example of an SSRI **citalopram**.

5. Describe some common side effects and nursing implications for tricyclic antidepressants.

Side effects of tricyclic antidepressants include drowsiness or fatigue, dry mouth, blurred vision, orthostatic hypotension, tachycardia or arrhythmias, constipation, urinary retention, blood dyscrasias, nausea/vomiting, photosensitivity, QT prolongation, and increased risk of suicidality in children or adolescents. A nurse will have to monitor for each of these symptoms and treat them as indicated.

6. **Hypertensive crisis** is the most potentially life-threatening adverse effect of MAOIs. Symptoms for which the nurse and client must be on the alert include **severe headache, hypertension, and chest pain**. What must be done to prevent these symptoms from occurring? (Your answer must include some examples.)

To prevent symptoms from occurring, it is important for patients to take blood pressure medications as prescribed and avoid foods high in tyramine.

7. Lithium carbonate is commonly prescribed for **bipolar disorder**. Many times when these individuals are started on lithium therapy, the physician also orders an antipsychotic medication. Why might he or she do so?

The patient may also have psychosis.

8. There is a narrow margin between the therapeutic and toxic serum levels of lithium carbonate. What is the therapeutic range? List the initial signs and symptoms of lithium toxicity.

The therapeutic range for lithium carbonate is 1.0-1.5 mEq/L in acute levels and 0.6-1.2mEq/L in maintenance levels. Initial symptoms include nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, tremors, blurred vision, and tinnitus.

9. Describe some nursing implications for the client on lithium therapy.

The nurse should be educated to get regular lithium levels done, avoid operating heavy machinery, avoid drinking caffeine, and drink 6-8 glasses of water per day.

10. What is the mechanism of action for anxiolytics (with the exception of buspirone)?

Anxiolytics exert CNS depressant activity at the subcortical levels of the CNS.

11. What is the most commonly used group of anxiolytics? Give two examples.

Antihistamines and benzodiazepines.

12. What are the most common side effects of anxiolytics?

drowsiness and fatigue and addiction.

13. What must the client on long-term anxiolytic therapy be instructed in order to prevent a potentially life-threatening situation?

Patients should be educated about not driving or operating heavy machinery and to monitor for signs and symptoms of blood dyscrasias such as sore throat, fever, or unusual bleeding.

14. What is thought to be the mechanism of action that produces the desired effect with antipsychotic medications?

Antipsychotics work by blocking postsynaptic dopamine receptors.

15. Phenothiazines are an example of a “typical” antipsychotic group. Give two examples of phenothiazines and two examples of the newer “atypical” antipsychotics.

Typical: chlorpromazine and fluphenazine

Atypical: loxapine and clozapine

16. Describe potential adverse hormonal effects associated with antipsychotic therapy.

Some adverse hormonal effects of antipsychotic therapy include decreased libido, amenorrhea, and retrograde ejaculation.

17. Agranulocytosis is a potentially very serious side effect of antipsychotic therapy. The nurse and client should be on the alert for symptoms of sore throat, fever, and malaise.

18. Neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS) is a rare but potentially fatal side effect of antipsychotic drugs.

List symptoms for which the nurse must be on the alert when assessing for NMS.

Symptoms include severe parkinsonian muscle rigidity, high fever, tachycardia, tachypnea, fluctuations in BP, diaphoresis, and rapid deterioration of mental status.

19. Describe the symptoms of extrapyramidal side effects associated with antipsychotic therapy.

Side effects include pseudoparkinsonism, akinesia, akathisia, dystonia, and oculogyric crisis.

20. What is the classification of medication that is commonly prescribed for drug-induced extrapyramidal reactions? Give two examples of these medications.

Antiparkinsonian agents are commonly used to treat EPS. Examples include benztropine and biperiden.

21. Describe a potentially life-threatening situation that could occur in the client who abruptly withdraws from long-term use of CNS stimulants.

Life-threatening situations such as depression, suicidal thoughts, and unstable vital signs can occur with abrupt withdraws of CNS stimulants.

This part is optional but encouraged!!

Homework Assignment Questions and Answers

Please read the chapter and answer the following questions:

1. Identify three priority safety concerns for each class of psychotropic medications.

Antianxiety Agents

Antipsychotics (novel)

Antipsychotics (phenothiazines and haloperidol)

MAO Inhibitors

SSNRIs

SSRIs

