

## OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the heterogeneous causes of psychosis in late life
2. List important steps in the diagnostic evaluation of late life psychosis
3. Appreciate the role as well as potential limitations and risks of antipsychotic medications in older individuals

## “PSYCHOSIS” DEFINITION:

- Not stated in the DSM-5 or the ICD classification systems
- “Psychotic features” include delusions, hallucinations, disorganized thinking, disorganized motor behavior, or negative symptoms
- Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders (DSM 5) have these features as hallmarks

## PSYCHOSIS IN LATE LIFE

Not uncommon

Varied etiologies

Develop due to the complex interaction between various biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors

More symptoms than actual disorders

Different clinical presentations

Associated with elevated morbidity and mortality

Talasilahti T, Alanen HM, Hakko H, et al. Patients with very-late-onset schizophrenia-like psychosis have higher mortality rates than elderly patients with earlier onset schizophrenia. *Int J Geriatr Psychiatry* 2015; 30: 453–459

## PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS

9

### PRIMARY

- Psychotic symptoms are part of the core symptoms of the disorder
  - Schizophrenia
  - Schizoaffective disorder
  - Schizophreniform disorder
  - Brief psychotic disorder
  - Delusional disorder
- Affective disorders
- Personality disorders

### SECONDARY

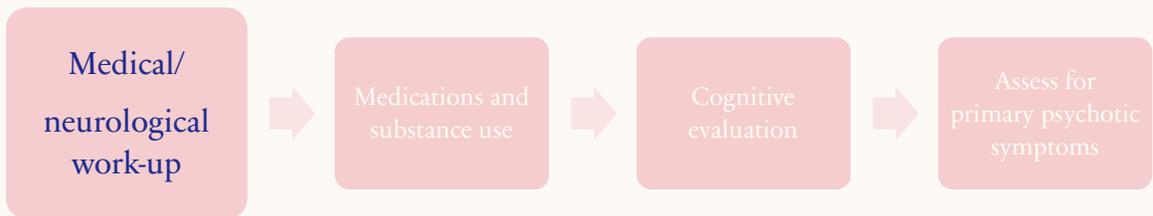
- Psychosis as a symptom of another disorder
  - Neurocognitive disorders
  - Delirium
  - Substance use
  - Medications
  - Other medical and neurological disorders (e.g., Parkinson's Disease)
- ~60% of cases of late life psychosis

American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-5®)*. 5th ed. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc.)  
Holroyd S, Laurie S. Correlates of psychotic symptoms among elderly outpatients. *Int J Geriatr Psychiatry* 1999; 14: 379–384

## DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS AND WORK-UP

- Entertain a broad differential
- Until proven otherwise, assume new-onset psychotic symptoms in older adults are SECONDARY, so initial work-up should focus on these causes
- Individuals with secondary psychosis are:
  - More likely to have an atypical age of onset
  - More likely to have VH independent of AH
  - Less likely to have previous psychiatric history or family psychiatric history

## DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS AND WORK-UP



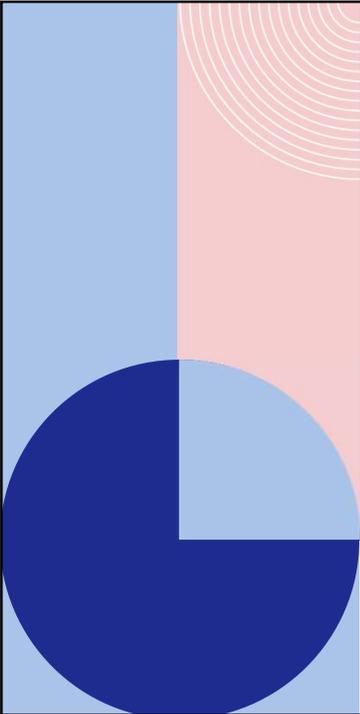
## DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS AND WORK-UP

- . History
  - . From patient and collateral sources
- . Physical and neurological exam
- . Labs
  - . CBC, CMP, TSH, B12, Folate, RPR, HIV, UA, urine toxicology
- . Neuroimaging

## PSYCHOSIS IN DELIRIUM

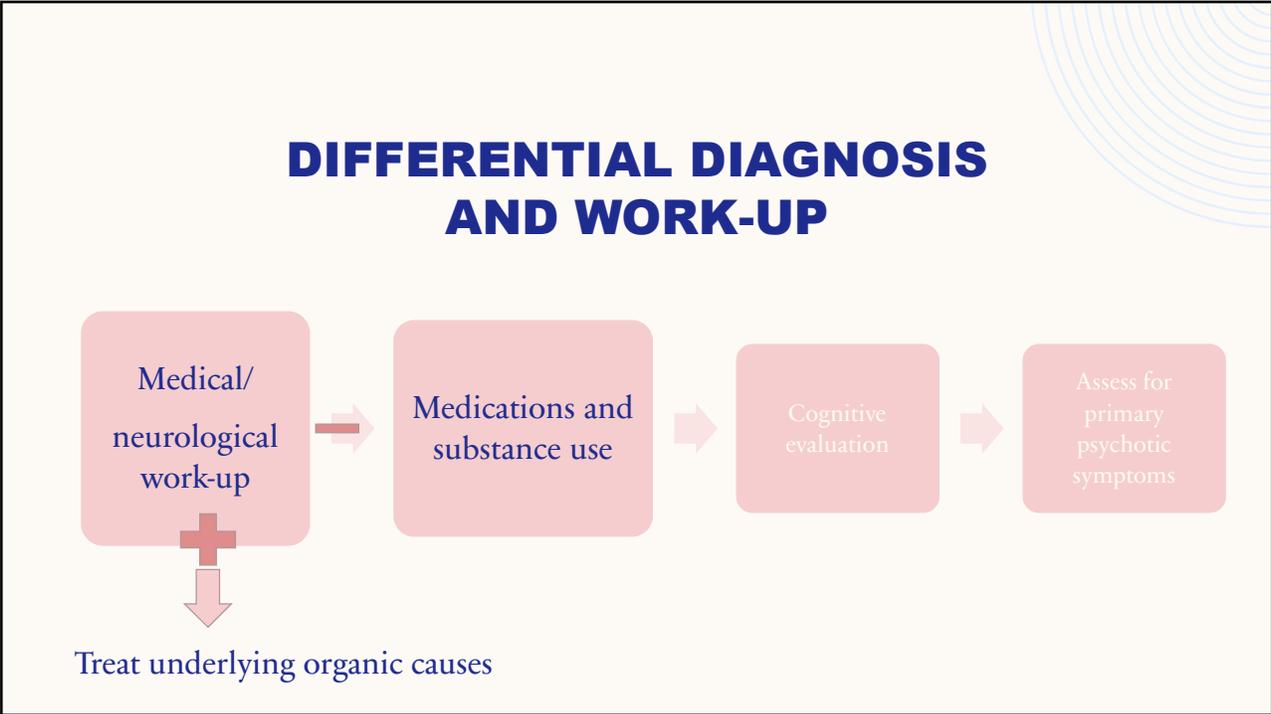
- Acute onset
- Fluctuating course
- Unsystematized and fragmented delusions
- New cognitive deficits
  - Inattention, especially
- Prevalence of psychotic symptoms in delirium is ~42.7%
  - Visual hallucinations - 27%
  - Auditory hallucinations - 12.4%
  - Tactile hallucinations - 2.7%
  - Delusions - 25.6%

Webster R, Holroyd S. Prevalence of psychotic symptoms in delirium. *Psychosomatics* 2000; 41: 519-522



### **PSYCHOSIS IN PARKINSON'S DISEASE**

- Hallucinations (especially VH) > delusions
- 10-40% of patients have at some point in illness
  - Risk factors include:
    - Higher dopaminergic medication load
    - Disease severity
    - Cognitive impairment
    - Poor visual acuity
    - Depression
- A poor prognostic indicator
  - More disabling than motor symptoms
  - Causes more caregiver distress
  - Threatens ability to remain at home



## DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS AND WORK-UP

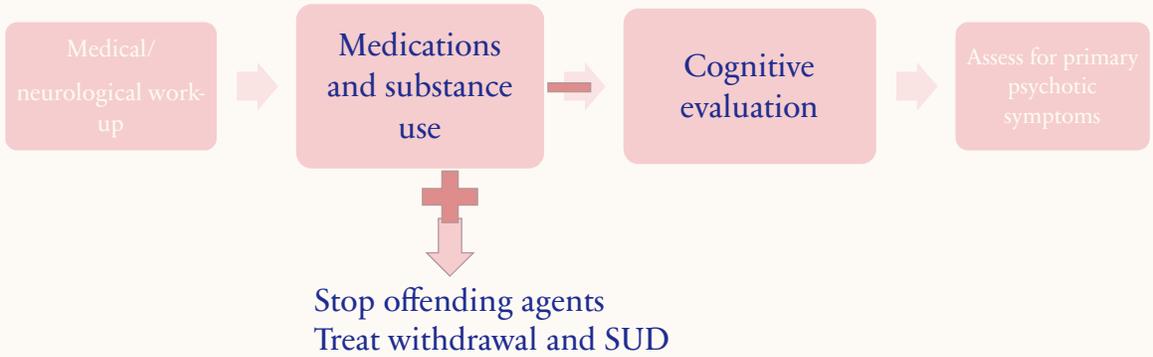
- Substance use history
- Thorough record of prescribed medications and OTCs
- Urine toxicology



### MEDICATIONS AND SUBSTANCES

- ANY medication can cause late life psychosis
- Most commonly offending agents:
  - Anti-parkinsonian/dopaminergic medications
  - Anticholinergics
  - Sedative-hypnotics
  - Stimulants
- OTC agents
  - Antihistamines, sleep aides
  - Ask about those “PM” formulations!
- Substances
  - Ask! People continue use into late life.

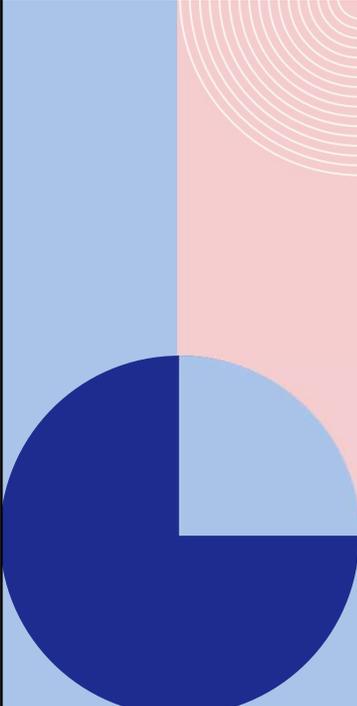
# DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS AND WORK-UP



## DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS AND WORK-UP

- . Cognitive history
- . Neuroimaging
- . Neuropsychological testing





## **DEMENTIA-RELATED PSYCHOSIS**

- THE MOST COMMON REASON FOR PSYCHOSIS IN LATE LIFE
- Overall pooled prevalence ~40%
- Convey greater cognitive and functional deficits
- Higher mortality
- Compared to schizophrenia:
  - More common in women
  - Less complex or bizarre delusions
    - Commonly persecutory or paranoid
  - More likely to experience misidentification
  - VH > AH
  - Unlikely to have thought-broadcasting or control of thought
  - Likely to eventually remit

## **DEMENTIA-RELATED PSYCHOSIS**

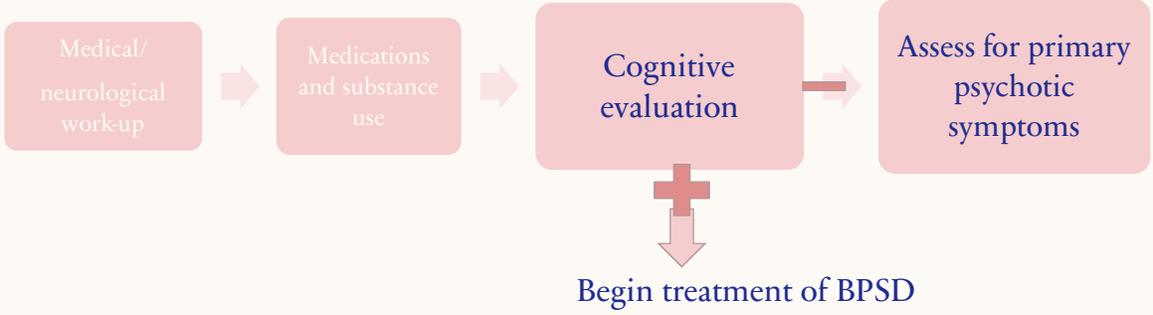
<b>ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE</b>	<b>VASCULAR DEMENTIA</b>	<b>DLB</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 41.1% prevalence</li> <li>• Delusions &gt; hallucinations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ~15% prevalence</li> <li>• Delusions &gt; hallucinations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 78% prevalence of hallucinations</li> <li>• 25% prevalence of delusions</li> <li>• VH tend to be well-formed and detailed</li> </ul>

Ropacki SA, Jeste DV. Epidemiology of and risk factors for psychosis of Alzheimer's disease: a review of 55 studies published from 1990 to 2003. *Am J Psychiatry* 2005; 162: 2022-2030

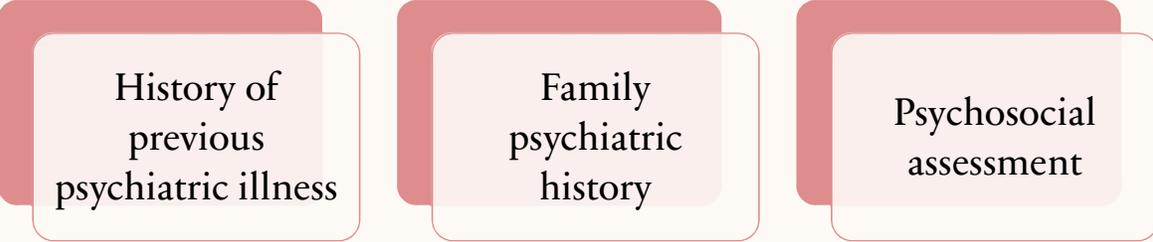
Leroi J, Voulgari A, Breitner JC, et al. The epidemiology of psychosis in dementia. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry* 2003; 11: 83-91

Nagahama Y, Okina T, Suzuki N, et al. Classification of psychotic symptoms in dementia with Lewy bodies. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry* 2007; 15: 961-967

# DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS AND WORK-UP



# DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS AND WORK-UP



## PRIMARY PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS

- Schizophrenia - 0.1–0.5% prevalence in older adults
  - Lifetime prevalence of 1%
- Schizoaffective disorder
- Schizophreniform disorder (< 6 months)
- Brief psychotic disorder (1 day – 6 months)
- Delusional disorder

## LATE LIFE SCHIZOPHRENIA

### EARLY ONSET

- <40 years
- 75-80% of cases
- + Negative symptoms
- + Family history
- Heterogeneous course
  - “Disease of thirds”

### LATE ONSET

- 40–60 years
- 20-25% of cases
- 🧠 > 🗣️
- Less negative symptoms
- + Family history
- Sensory deficits, social isolation, premorbid paranoid/schizoid PD

### VERY LATE ONSET SCHIZOPHRENIA-LIKE PSYCHOSIS (VLOSLP)

- >60 years
- 🧠 >> 🗣️
- Rare negative symptoms
- Less family history

## SCHIZOAFFECTIVE DISORDER

- Psychotic symptoms in the absence of mood symptoms for at least 2 weeks
- Prevalence among adults  $\geq 60$  years = 0.14%
- Depressive type > bipolar type
- ♀ > ♂, especially with later onset
- Compared to those with schizophrenia:
  - Have better community functioning
  - Poorer subjective physical and mental health
- Compared to younger adults with schizoaffective disorder:
  - Have greater severity of illness
  - Worse outcomes
    - Including greater treatment resistance and risk for suicide

Meesters PD, de Haan L, Comijs HC, et al. Schizophrenia spectrum disorders in later life: prevalence and distribution of age at onset and sex in a Dutch catchment area. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry* 2012; 20: 18–28  
 Post F. Schizo-affective symptomatology in late life. *Br J Psychiatry* 1971; 118: 437–445

## DELUSIONAL DISORDERS

- Entrenched delusional systems, minimal hallucinations, lasting  $\geq 1$  month
- Estimated prevalence among older adults = 0.03%
- More common in older adults
  - Average age of onset ~49 years old
- ♀ > ♂
- Limited knowledge about this disorder in older people

Gonzalez-Rodriguez A, Molina-Andreu O, Navarro V, et al. Delusional disorder: no gender differences in age at onset, suicidal ideation, or suicidal behavior. *Br J Psychiatry* 2014; 36: 119–124  
 Maher B. Delusional thinking and cognitive disorder. *Integr Physiol Behav Sci* 2005; 40: 136–146

## AFFECTIVE AND PERSONALITY DISORDERS

- Major Depressive Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder
- Paranoid Personality Disorder



## MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER

- More likely to have psychotic symptoms in late life
  - Present in ~45% of older patients hospitalized for reasons related to depression
  - More common in those who are single, widowed, or living alone (sensory or social deprivation?)
- Delusions > hallucinations
  - Guilt - some relatively trivial episode from long ago currently viewed as a major problem (e.g., a one-time infidelity long since forgiven)
  - Somatic - fear of ongoing disease, often with somatic symptoms (often associated with the abdomen)
  - Nihilism
  - Persecution

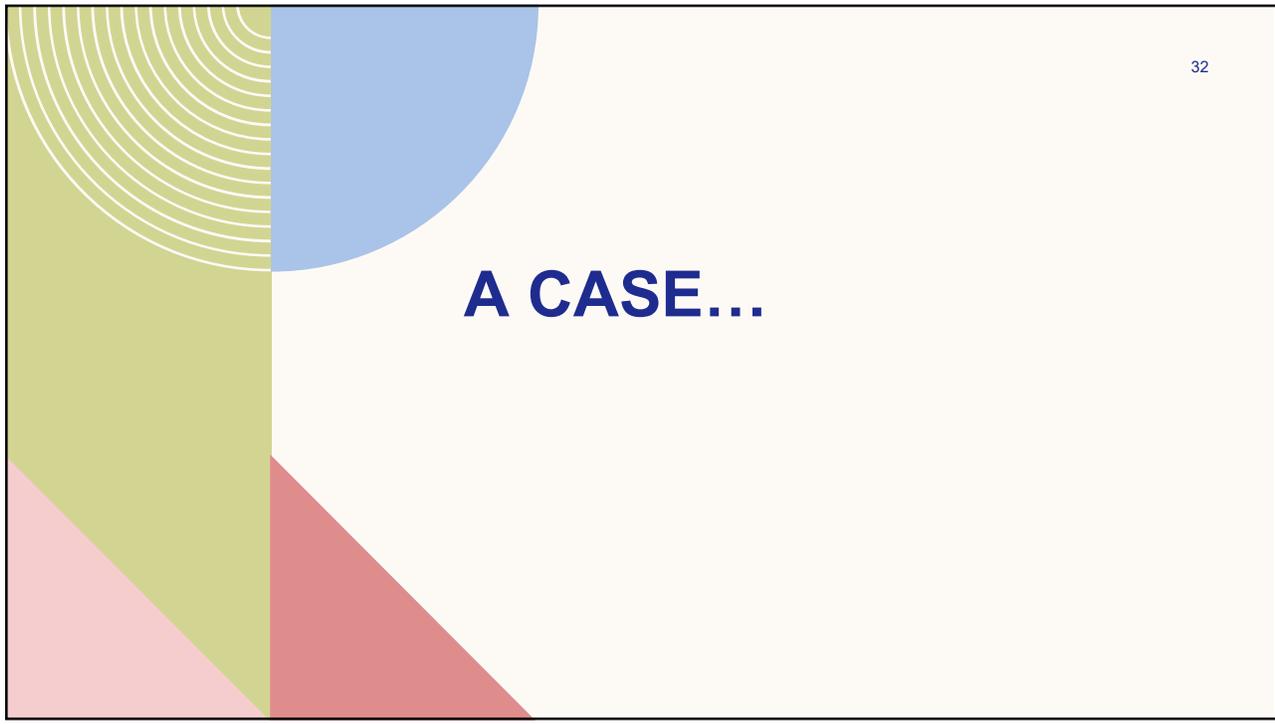
## BIPOLAR DISORDER

- Rarely has onset in late life
- Psychotic symptoms are common in both affective phases
  - Mean frequency of psychotic features in bipolar disorder among the elderly that was pooled from a review of 5 studies was found to be 64%
  - Psychotic features more common with late onset

Gournellis R, Oulis P, Rizos E, et al. Clinical correlates of age of onset in psychotic depression. *Arch Gerontol Geriatr* 2011; 52: 94-98

## PARANOID PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ♂ > ♀
- Prevalence increases with age and medical comorbidities
- Distrustful of others
- Excessive trust in own knowledge/abilities
- Read hidden meanings into ordinary things
- Read hostile intentions into acts of others
- Appear cold and distant
- Quick to challenge loyalties of friends/family
- Shift blame to others
- Tend to carry long grudges



# A CASE...

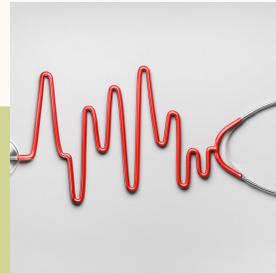
## TREATMENT: GENERAL PRINCIPLES



**IS TREATMENT  
NECESSARY?**



**MEDICATION  
SELECTION AND  
INITIATION**



**TITRATION AND  
MONITORING**



**REDUCTION AND  
DISCONTINUATION**

# TREATMENT: GENERAL PRINCIPLES



## IS TREATMENT NECESSARY?

35

<b>FIRST, DO NO HARM</b>	<b>TREATMENT IN SCHIZOPHRENIA IMPROVES FUNCTIONING AND OUTCOMES</b>	<b>FDA BLACK BOX WARNING</b>	<b>PSYCHOSIS RESULTS IN HIGHER CAREGIVER DISTRESS AND CAN JEOPARDIZE PLACEMENT</b>
<b>FDA INDICATIONS: SCHIZOPHRENIA, BIPOLAR DISORDER, MDD, PD PSYCHOSIS</b>	<b>BEERS CRITERIA RECOMMENDS AVOIDING USE FOR TREATMENT OF DEMENTIA AND DELIRIUM</b>	<b>PSYCHOSIS IS ASSOCIATED WITH POOR OUTCOMES</b>	<b>NO FDA INDICATION:  DEMENTIA WITH BPSD, INSOMNIA, ANXIETY</b>

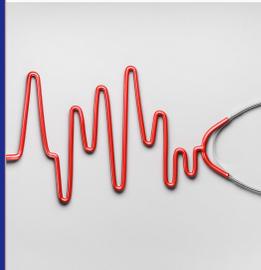
# TREATMENT: GENERAL PRINCIPLES



IS TREATMENT NECESSARY?



MEDICATION SELECTION AND INITIATION



TITRATION AND MONITORING



REDUCTION AND DISCONTINUATION

## MEDICATION SELECTION AND INITIATION

Limited studies of antipsychotics in older adults

Choose a medication with the most empirical evidence for the condition AND the best safety and tolerability

Educate patient and surrogate decision maker on adverse effects and risks

Document informed consent. Include risks, benefits, alternatives. Document your decision making clearly.

Start low (1/2 the starting dose for adults)

**TABLE 2**  
**ANTIPSYCHOTICS: SAFETY AND TOLERABILITY<sup>1</sup>**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Typical Neuroleptic</i>	<i>Clozapine</i>	<i>Risperidone</i>	<i>Olanzapine</i>	<i>Quetiapine</i>	<i>Ziprasidone</i>	<i>Aripiprazole</i>
EPS	+ to +++	±	± to +++*	± to +*	±	± to +*	± to +
TD	+++	±	± to ++	± (?)	± (?)	± (?)	± (?)
Somnolence	± to +++	+++	±	++	++	±	±
Prolactin	+++	±	+++	±	±	±	±
Weight	± to ++	+++	+	+++	++	±	±
Dyslipidemia	± to +	+++	+	+++	++	±	±
DM	± to +	+++	+	+++	++	±	±
QTc	+	++	+	+	+	++	±
Orthostatic BP ↓	± to +++	+++	++	+	++	±	±

\*Dose-related.

Key: ±=none-to-minimal; +=mild; ++=moderate; +++=marked; ?=no data, compared to placebo rates.

EPS=extrapyramidal symptoms; TD=tardive dyskinesia; DM=diabetes mellitus; QTc=corrected Q-T interval; BP=blood pressure.

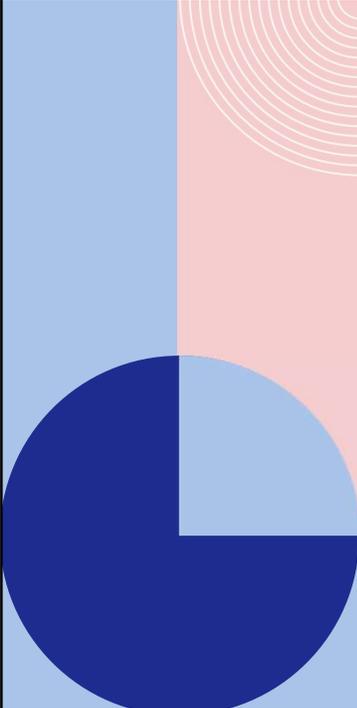
Glick ID, He X, Davis JM. *Primary Psychiatry*. Vol 13, No 12. 2006.

## SCHIZOPHRENIA

- 2018 systematic review and meta-analysis of antipsychotic drugs for elderly patients with schizophrenia:
  - 29 references - all RCTs
  - 1225 individuals
  - Mean age 57-73
  - Primary outcome of overall symptoms

### Results:

- Paliperidone had fewer drop-outs due to inefficacy than placebo
- Olanzapine superior to haloperidol for overall symptoms and negative symptoms
- Risperidone and haloperidol increased prolactin more than olanzapine
- Olanzapine had less use of antiparkinsonian medication than haloperidol



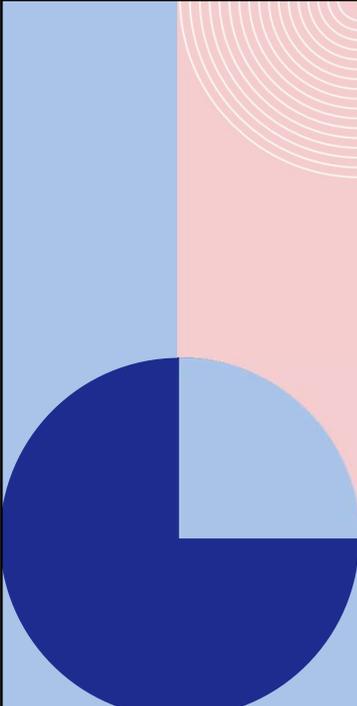
## SCHIZOPHRENIA

- Dearth of high-quality pharmacotherapy studies in LOS and VLOSLP
  - Largest and best trials of risperidone and olanzapine
  - Smaller trials of newer agents
- Both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation antipsychotics are beneficial, but limited by adverse effects.
- Considerable pharmacological heterogeneity even within groups.
- Treatment of EOS in late-life using risperidone and olanzapine has Level 3 evidence
- Little evidence to support the use of clozapine in treatment-resistance geriatric patients due to its significant side effect profile
- Paliperidone also has some efficacy compared with placebo in the treatment of elderly patients with schizophrenia (Level 2 evidence)

Rothenberg KG, Boyd S, Sommerville R, et al. Clozapine in geriatric population-clinical indication and safety monitoring. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry* 22: S73–S74

Mukku SSR, Sivakumar PT, Varghese M. Clozapine use in geriatric patients: challenges. *Asian J Psychiatry* 2018; 33: 63–67

Tizmos A, Samokhvalov V, Kramer M, et al. Safety and tolerability of oral paliperidone extended-release tablets in elderly patients with schizophrenia: a double-blind, placebo-controlled study with six-month open-label extension. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry* 2008; 16: 31–43



## DLB PSYCHOSIS

- **Donepezil** and **rivastigmine** can improve cognition, psychotic symptoms, and quality of life
- **Clozapine** has Level 2 evidence
  - Has greater serotonergic affinity and selective binding of D1 mesolimbic receptors while sparing striatal D2 receptors implicated in the deterioration of motor functions.
- One systematic review investigating the efficacy of **quetiapine** in patients with LBD found only one open-label trial that was able to report a significant reduction in psychotic symptoms
- **Pimavanserin** is a 5HT<sub>2A</sub> receptor inverse agonist, and has demonstrated efficacy in improving psychotic symptoms in Parkinson's disease, and in a group of mixed phenotype dementia-related psychosis

McKeith IG, Boeve BF, Dickson DW, et al. Diagnosis and management of dementia with Lewy bodies: Fourth Consensus Report of the DLB Consortium. *Neurology*. 2017;89(1):88–100

Tariot PN, Cummings JL, Soto-Martin ME, Ballard C, Erten-Lyons D, Sultzer DL, Devanand DP, Weintraub D, McEvoy B, Youakim JM, Stankovic S, Foff EP. Trial of Pimavanserin in Dementia-Related Psychosis. *N Engl J Med*. 2021 Jul 22;385(4):309-319

Factor SA, Friedman JH, Lannon MC; Parkinson Study Group. Clozapine for the treatment of drug-induced psychosis in Parkinson's disease: results of the 12 week open label extension in the PSYCLOPS trial. *Mov Disord* 2001; 16: 135–139

Desmarais P, Massoud E, Filion J, et al. Quetiapine for psychosis in Parkinson disease and neurodegenerative Parkinsonian disorders: a systematic review. *J Geriatr Psych Neurol* 2016; 29: 227-36

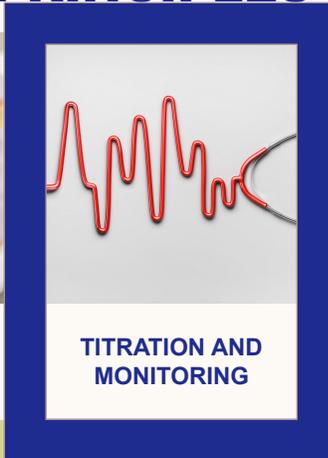
# TREATMENT: GENERAL PRINCIPLES



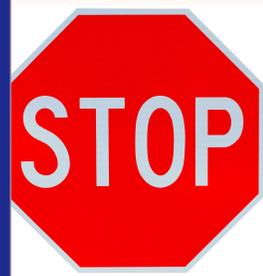
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MEDICATION  
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INITIATION



TITRATION AND  
MONITORING



REDUCTION AND  
DISCONTINUATION

## TITRATION AND MONITORING

Go slow

Aim for  
lowest  
effective dose

Frequently  
assess for  
target  
symptoms  
and side  
effects

AIMS, labs,  
weight, EKG  
as  
appropriate

Avoid  
polypharmacy

## SCHIZOPHRENIA

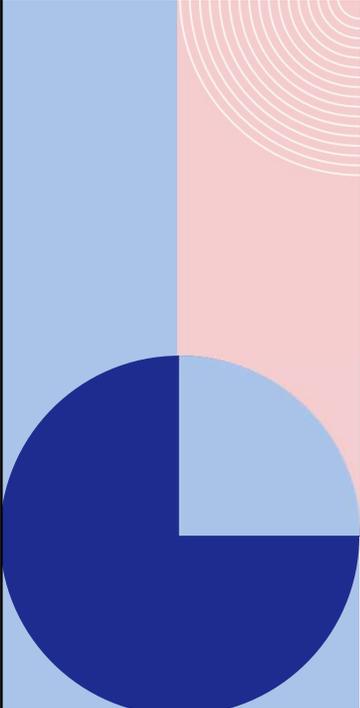
- Lower dosing needed for LOS and VLOSLP
- EPS risk very high in VLOSLP
- Recommended dosing is based on expert consensus
  - Risperidone 1.25-3.5 mg/day as first-line
  - Alternatively, quetiapine 100-300 mg/day, olanzapine 7.5-15 mg/day, and aripiprazole 15-30 mg/day

Alexopoulos GS, Strem JE, Carpenter D. Commentary: expert consensus guidelines for using antipsychotic agents in older patients. *J Clin Psychiatry* 2004; 65: 100-102

## DLB PSYCHOSIS

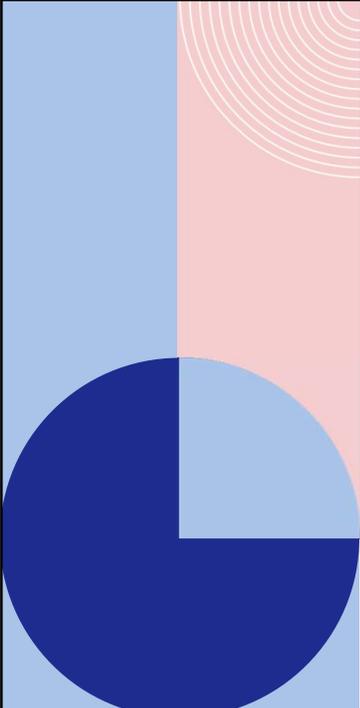
- Caution with prescribing neuroleptics in patients with DLB!
- Risk of rigidity, neuroleptic malignant syndrome, and death as a consequence of the underlying disruption of dopaminergic neurotransmission
- Remember, clozapine has a significant side effect profile!
  - Orthostatic hypotension
  - Sedation
  - Agranulocytosis

Factor SA, Friedman JH, Lannon MC; Parkinson Study Group. Clozapine for the treatment of drug-induced psychosis in Parkinson's disease: results of the 12 week open label extension in the PSYCLOPS trial. *Mov Disord* 2001; 16: 135-139



## MONITORING

- Risks in older adults:
  - Sedation
  - Anticholinergic effects
  - Orthostatic hypotension
  - EPS (almost 6 times more common in older than younger adults)
  - QTc prolongation
  - Metabolic side effects (especially of olanzapine, quetiapine, clozapine)
  - Acute kidney injury
  - CVAs
  - Cognitive decline
  - Death



## MONITORING

- Risks in older adults:
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  - **Death**

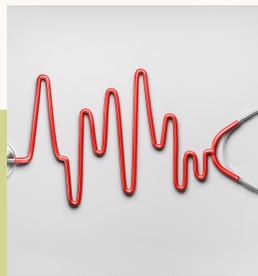
# TREATMENT: GENERAL PRINCIPLES



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# REDUCTION AND DISCONTINUATION



## DURATION OF TREATMENT

- No clear data on how long to treat
- After 3-6 months of stability?
- Taper, don't stop



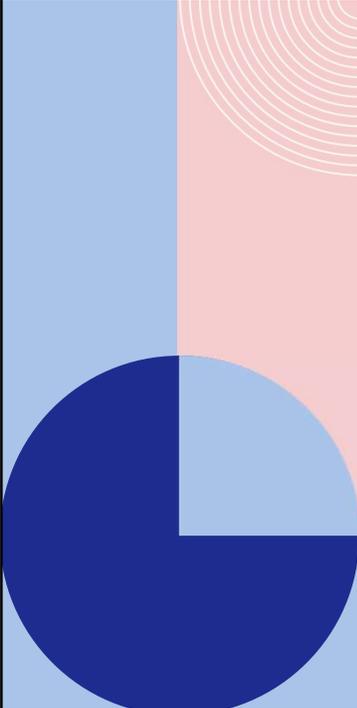
## GRADUAL DOSE REDUCTION (GDR)

- When used for dementia-related psychosis, consider dose reductions at least every 3 months
- "Lowest dose for the shortest duration"
- This is mandatory in long-term care settings



## IF TREATMENT FAILS

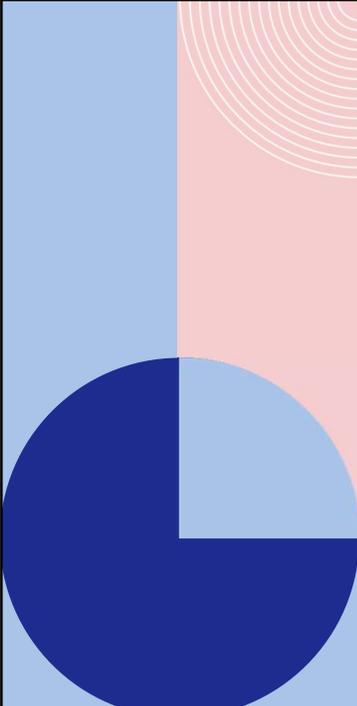
- Reformulate the diagnosis, and medical/neuro/pharm etiologies
- Reassess previous med trials for adequate dose/duration
- Get consultation from a colleague



## SCHIZOPHRENIA

- Data are limited regarding the discontinuation of antipsychotic medications in older adults diagnosed with chronic schizophrenia
- Attempt discontinuation of antipsychotics only in older patients who have not responded or those with long-standing clinical remission
- If discontinuation is not feasible, consider decreasing the dose of medications to the lowest effective dosage to minimize risk of adverse events

Takeuchi H, Suzuki T, Remington G, et al. Effects of risperidone and olanzapine dose reduction on cognitive function in stable patients with schizophrenia: an open-label, randomized, controlled, pilot study. *Schizophrenia Bull* 2013; 39: 993–998



## ECT

- Safe in all ages, though fewer studies in the geriatric population
- Very effective for MDD or Bipolar disorder with psychosis
- Smaller body of literature for schizophrenia
- One selective review reports that prospective trials of ECT in psychotic elderly patients have indicated that bilateral ECT is a safe and effective treatment for older patients with schizophrenia
  - Synergistic with concurrent antipsychotic therapy
  - Best evidence for patients presenting with aggression, catatonia, and other cases that require rapid response such as acute suicidality or an acute onset of illness

Meyer JP, Swetter SK, Kellner CH. Electroconvulsive therapy in geriatric psychiatry: a selective review. *Psychiatr Clin North Am* 2018; 41: 79–93

## PSYCHOSOCIAL TREATMENTS

- A number of programs (e.g., CBSST, FAST, HOPES) focusing on cognitive-behavioral interventions, social skills training, every day living skills, preventative health care, and vocational counseling/support have been conducted in middle-aged and older adults with benefit to psychotic symptoms, social functioning, and living skills.

Granholm E, McQuaid JR, McClure FS, et al: Randomized controlled trial of cognitive behavioral social skills training for older people with schizophrenia: 12-month follow-up. *J Clin Psychiatry* 68(5):730-737, 2007.

Patterson TL, Mausbach BT, McKibbin C, et al: Functional adaptation skills training (FAST): a randomized trial of a psychosocial intervention for middle-aged and older patients with chronic psychotic disorders. *Schizophr Res* 86(1-3):291-299, 2006.

Barrels SJ, Pratt SI, Mueser KT, et al: Long-term outcomes of a randomized trial of integrated skills training and preventive healthcare for older adults with serious mental illness. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry* 22(11):1251-1261, 2014.

Twamley EW, Padin DS, Bayne KS, et al: Work rehabilitation for middle-aged and older people with schizophrenia: a comparison of three approaches. *J Nerv Ment Dis* 193(9):596-601, 2005.

## SUMMARY

- Psychosis in late life has variable presentations and etiologies
- Secondary causes are more common than primary psychotic disorders
- Work-up should be thorough to rule out the potential medical, neurological, medication or substance-related causes
- The most common cause of late life psychosis is dementia
- Early-onset schizophrenia has a considerably heterogeneous course into late life
- Late-onset schizophrenia and VLOSLP describe presentations with later life onset, and greater female predominance
- Older adults have a much higher risk of antipsychotic adverse effects, particularly EPS
- Antipsychotics have an FDA black box warning for their use in the setting of dementia
- There are (nearly) no FDA-approved treatments for psychosis related to dementia or delirium, but off-label use of medications along with non-pharmacological approaches may be appropriate on individual bases



**THANK YOU!**

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