

TOP 10 MEDICATION SAFETY TIPS

- 1 Check your PDMP each time before you prescribe a controlled substance.** That's the law – and a great patient safety strategy. No matter how well you know your patient, you could always be surprised by what you find.
- 2 Do not prescribe large amounts of medications solely because the patient gets better insurance benefits / pays less.** Bulk prescriptions may be fine for many patients, but are likely not appropriate for all. The standard of care is based on the patient's clinical needs, not insurance benefits.
- 3 Check your e-prescriptions to ensure accuracy prior to sending.** Data entry errors, such as with drop down boxes, are common, and have the potential to cause patient harm.
- 4 Read the FDA labels for the medications you prescribe.** Not only is this clinically useful, but if you are ever alleged to have been negligent in prescribing, you will almost certainly be asked if you have read the drug label. You want to be able to respond under oath in the affirmative.
- 5 Sign up for [Medwatch](#) to get medication safety alerts from the FDA.** You may need to discuss the new safety information with the patient. This should be documented, along with any changes to medication monitoring that are needed, whether that's lab testing, more frequent visits, consults with another specialist, etc.
- 6 Be alert to potential abuse and/or diversion.** An excellent resource from the DEA is [Recognizing the Abuser](#).
- 7 When continuing a medication started by the patient's prior psychiatrist, get new informed consent.** You cannot rely on another prescriber's informed consent, or even presume that it actually was done.
- 8 Alert patients to driving implications of a new medication, and document that was discussed.** You are not responsible for ensuring patients do not drive, but you are responsible for discussing the possible impact of the medication on driving as a risk in your informed consent discussions.
- 9 Ensure any lab work you order, such as lithium levels, is done and reviewed by you.** Tracking of lab work, or more accurately failing to track, is not an uncommon fact in the lawsuits against psychiatrists.
- 10 Never hesitate to seek consultation.** You have peers that are experts in psychopharmacology, such as for pregnant patients, that can assist with treatment questions, even if to confirm your approach is appropriate.

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