

2025 Star Measure Tips



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One in a series of tip sheets about HEDIS® and other measures that contribute to star ratings of Medicare Advantage plans.

Polypharmacy: Use of Multiple Anticholinergic Medications in Older Adults (POLY-ACH)

Pharmacy Quality Alliance-endorsed performance measures

Did you know?

- Anticholinergics have also been associated with increased risk of dementia.
- Anticholinergic drugs may cause cognitive disorder symptoms which may be mistaken as normal manifestations of aging.
- Long-term continued use of anticholinergic drugs could induce brain changes partially comparable to those present in Alzheimer's disease.

Measure description

The percentage of patients with concurrent use of unique anticholinergic medications.

Measure population (denominator)

Patients ≥ 65 years and older with two or more prescriptions filled for the same anticholinergic medication on different dates of service during the measurement year.

Measure compliance (numerator)

Patients with concurrent use of two or more unique anticholinergic medications filled for at least a 30-day supply on different dates of service.

NOTE: A lower rate indicates better performance

continued

Antidepressant Medications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amitriptyline • amoxapine • clomipramine • desipramine • doxepin (>6 mg/day) • imipramine • nortriptyline • paroxetine 	Antiemetic Medications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prochlorperazine • promethazine
Antihistamine Medications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brompheniramine • chlorpheniramine • cyproheptadine • dimenhydrinate • diphenhydramine (oral) • doxylamine • hydroxyzine • meclizine • triprolidine 	Antimuscarinic Medications (urinary incontinence) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • darifenacin • fesoterodine • flavoxate • oxybutynin • solifenacin • tolterodine • trospium
Antiparkinsonian Agent Medications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • benztropine • trihexyphenidyl 	Antipsychotic Medications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chlorpromazine • clozapine • olanzapine • perphenazine
Antispasmodic Medications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • atropine (excludes ophthalmic) • clidinium-chlordiazepoxide • dicyclomine • homatropine (excludes ophthalmic) • hyoscyamine • scopolamine (excludes ophthalmic) 	Skeletal Muscle Relaxant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cyclobenzaprine • orphenadrine

Exclusions

- Received hospice services anytime during the measurement year

Helpful hints

- **Avoid** the use of anticholinergic medications in older adults without first considering safer alternatives or non-drug measures.
- **Assess** for side effects including confusion, dry mouth, blurry vision, constipation, urinary retention, decreased perspiration, and excess sedation.
- **Discuss** risks and side effects of anticholinergic medications
- **Continue** long-term co-prescribing only when necessary and monitor closely.

Resources

1. Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA). 2024. "PQA Quality Measures." pqaalliance.org/medication-safety
2. National Institutes of Health (NIH). 2019. "Anticholinergic Drugs in Geriatric Psychopharmacology." ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6908498/
3. American Academy Family Physician (AAFP). 2024. "Don't recommend highly anticholinergic medications in older adults without first considering safer alternatives or non-drug measures." www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/collections/choosing-wisely/484.html

Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA) is a national quality organization dedicated to improving medication safety, adherence and appropriate use. PQA measures are included in the Medicare Part D Star Ratings.

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