

Psychopharmacology Algorithm Project Harvard Medical School

The main aim of this project is to improve the quality of psychopharmacological thinking and care by promoting evidence-based practice especially through the use of computerized algorithms. The evidence considered includes high quality empirical research studies but also uncontrolled studies and compilations of expert opinion and practice guidelines. The Project's algorithms provide a base of knowledge to consider before making an individualized determination of what is best for the patient. They are not a set of rules to use without deviation.

At this time, the Project's staff has developed three Web-based pharmacotherapy algorithms: Depression, Schizophrenia, and Anxiety Disorders in Patients with Substance Abuse. Other decision support information available at the site includes medication dosing strategies, side effect management, a program which offers detailed information about cytochrome P450 drug interactions that might occur when multiple drugs are prescribed, comparative costs of different medications, and algorithms for assessing and managing treatment compliance issues. All information is extensively referenced.

Virtual Consultation

Each algorithm program offers a virtual consultation by asking the clinician questions about the patient. The reasoning behind the sequence of questions is explained at each step. The questions conclude with recommendations which are discussed and referenced, and the merits and problems associated with alternatives to the first-line choices are reviewed. Questions and recommendations are accompanied by clinical confidence ratings which indicate the strength of scientific support for them.

The medication algorithms may be accessed at: www.mhc.com/Algorithms

The computerized cytochrome P450 drug interactions program may be accessed at:
www.mhc.com/Cytochromes

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