

# Am I taking too many pills?

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# Activity

- \* How many tablets (including prescribed, self/non prescribed medications, vitamins, minerals, supplements do you take a day?
- \* Raise your hands IF.....

< 5 tablets per day?



> 5 tablets per day?



# QUESTIONS

- \* Do you know what they are?
- \* Do you know why you are taking them?
- \* Are they prescribed/non prescribed/recommended?
- \* If on > 5 medications, do you take them regularly /on time?
- \* Do you have any difficulty taking them?

# What you want to know!

- \* Are they necessary?
- \* The more medications you are on the better you feel?
- \* What about supplements??
  - \* Should everybody take them?
  - \* How many should I take?
  - \* Which ones are good?
  - \* How do I decide?
- \* How about traditional medications?
- \* Can I mix them with my regular medication?

# SOME FACTS....

Ageing is a **BIG** issue

- \* 1 million Japanese >100 years old
- \* Malaysia CATCHING UP FAST
- \* Ratio of young to old decreasing
- \* > LONGEVITY = > NUMBER OF DISEASES
- \* **IMPACT** of greater medications range

# Polypharmacy in older adults

- \* IS IT A NECESSARY, UNAVOIDABLE EVIL?





# POLYPHARMACY

- \* Mixing of many drugs in one prescription
- \* Use of more medication than is clinically required
- \* Multiple use of medication by an individual

# Is it necessary to use so many drugs?

- \* 'Obligatory' or 'rational' polypharmacy
  - \* Hypertension
  - \* Congestive cardiac failure
  - \* Diabetes
- \* 'Indiscriminate' polypharmacy
  - \* A major medical problem in the elderly

# How big is the problem?

- \* > 65 year olds: **greatest consumers** of prescription drugs!
- \* **Females**>Males
- \* **30%** of all drug prescriptions written for patients > 65 yrs old
- \* **2/3** of elderly take prescribed or Over The Counter(OTC) meds
- \* Average of **5 prescribed** and **2 OTC**/patient (more in Nursing Homes)
  - \* ↑ **DRUG INTERACTIONS** and **ADRs**

# How big is the problem in UMMC?

- \* Pattern of geriatric admissions among the elderly to all medical wards
- \* Patients discharged on multiple medications
  - 1993- 40.5%
  - 2005- 61.1%
  - 2015- **CLOSE TO 70%!!!**

# Effects of Polypharmacy on Compliance

- \* **Visual impairment**
  - \* 32% of the time unable to identify different tablets correctly
- \* **Physical problems**
  - \* Tablets difficult to pick up, hold
  - \* ‘Old-person-proof’ containers
- \* **Memory**
  - \* Complicated therapeutic regimes



# Effects of Polypharmacy on Compliance

- \* Adverse effects
  - \* Avoid treating side effects of one drug with another
- \* Cost
  - \* Financial burden
  - \* Stop taking, adjust dose to extend over longer time



YOUR MONEY  
OR YOUR  
HEALTH!

SKYROCKETING  
DRUG PRICES

# WHO IS TO BLAME?

\* DOCTORS?

\* THE OLDER PERSON?

\* PHARMACIST?

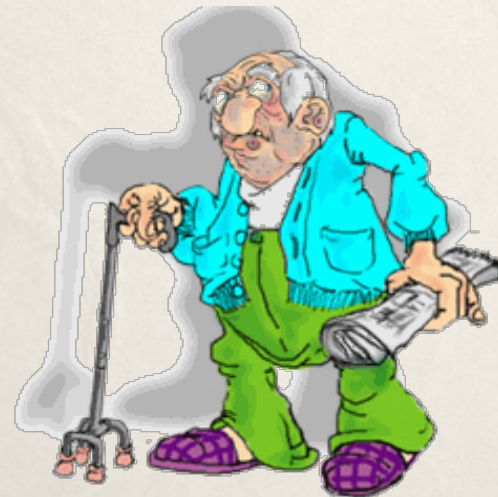


# DOCTORS?

- \* Ageist attitude towards elderly
  - \* Misdiagnosis
  - \* Inappropriate prescribing
  - \* Lack of patient education on how to take medication and their side effects
  
- \* No review of drugs prescribed

# The older person?

- \* More medical conditions
- \* Beliefs and expectations **“A PILL FOR EVERY ILL”**
- \* Less likely to mention other medication taken





# PHARMACISTS?

- \* Trained to provide consultation about drugs to doctors and patients
- \* Expert in drug activity and SIDE EFFECTS
- \* Drug labels - use of generic and brand name drug

# Pharmacists?

- \* No pharmacist (even the most experienced) correctly recognize all the potential drug-drug interactions when presented with scenarios involving 8 or more medicines.
- \* Weideman *et al*

# Inappropriate Polypharmacy

\* WHEN?

\* WHY?

\* HOW CAN WE AVOID IT?

# When?

- \* Lack of awareness of age-related changes
- \* In presence of memory impairment +/- multiple health problems or disease
- \* Ease of access to Over The Counter(OTC) drugs

# Why?

- \* **“Doctor shopping phenomena”**
- \* Physicians unable to keep up to date with new drugs
- \* Doctor-pharmacist communication





# How to avoid polypharmacy in the elderly

## \* CHECK

- \* All medications used
- \* Current and relevant past medical problems
- \* Need for prescriptions at regular intervals

## \* WITH NEW MEDICAL PROBLEMS

- \* Try non drug approach
- \* Consider Adverse Drug Reaction as cause

# If prescribed a new drug:ASK!!!

1. Why am I on this?
2. Is it effective for the condition?
3. Correct dose? “START LOW, GO SLOW”
4. Given time to understand AND EXPLAINED CLEARLY
5. Avoid duplication of treatment: always bring all medication to a consult
6. Correct duration
7. Least toxic alternative

# SUPPLEMENTS

In Older people

# Why take supplements?

- \* **CONTROVERSIAL!!!**
- \* Well balanced diet
- \* Nutrition requirements
  - \* older people = younger people.
  - \* (EXCEPT Vitamin D (> 65 years old))

# Who needs supplements?

## \* Chronic Illness

- \* Chronic conditions can affect intake
- \* Disability
- \* Depression
- \* Poor oral health (e.g., cavities, gum disease, and **MISSING TEETH**) and dry mouth
- \* Antidepressants, blood pressure, and asthma medications → dry mouth

# Who needs supplements?

## \* Physiological changes

- \* Decrease in lean body mass and redistribution of fat around internal organs
- \* Change in taste (from medications, nutrient deficiencies, or taste bud atrophy)

# Who needs supplements?

## \* **Poor Dietary intake**

- \* Little or no appetite
- \* Problems with eating or swallowing.
- \* Eating inadequate servings of nutrients.
- \* Eating fewer than two meals a day.

\* **Limited income** may cause restriction in the number of meals eaten per day or dietary quality of meals eaten. <sup>6</sup>

## \* **Isolation**

- \* Older adults who live alone may lose desire to cook because of loneliness.
- \* Appetite of decreases.
- \* Difficulty cooking due to disabilities.
- \* Lack of access to transportation to buy food.

# 5 simple rules when buying a supplement

- \* Know why....or if you need them
- \* Don't be fooled by eye-catching labels
- \* Keep it simple-avoid mega doses or extra ingredients
- \* Choose a respected brand
- \* Caution when buying on the internet

\* **SPEAK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER**



Thank you

**QUESTIONS PLEASE!!!!**