



Gastrointestinal Disorders, the Elderly and Long-Term Care

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Background

The incidence of gastrointestinal (GI) tract disorders increases with age. Physiologic changes associated with aging, including impaired esophageal peristalsis, reduced lower esophageal sphincter (LES) tone, and delayed gastric emptying can produce upper GI motility disorders and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) causing uncomfortable, even disabling, symptoms.

GI motility disorders in the elderly include gastroparesis, dyspepsia, constipation, motility disorders associated with autonomic neuropathy (e.g., amyloidosis, alcoholism, Parkinson's disease, uremia, malnutrition), and drug-induced motility disorders. The most common upper GI motility disorder in the elderly is gastroparesis.

Unfortunately, upper GI motility disorders and GERD are aggravated by many conditions common to the elderly. Because GI dysmotility is often empirically diagnosed and residents can have numerous concurrent chronic conditions and medications that may complicate assessment and treatment, upper GI motility disorders and GERD man-

agement in the long-term care setting can be particularly challenging for clinicians. However, heightened awareness of the presentation of GI disease in the elderly, early intervention, and development of effective treatment approaches have reduced morbidity.

Management Goals

Upper GI motility disorders and GERD management should focus on improving survival and quality of life. As life expectancy continues to increase, clinicians in nursing facilities will encounter more elderly residents with upper GI motility disorders and GERD. It is important for healthcare providers to have the necessary tools to select appropriate therapeutic options to improve quality of life for this growing population. To address the issues of upper GI motility disorders and GERD in long-term care, PharMerica has launched its Upper GI Motility Disorders and GERD Management Program. The program is designed for implementation within the nursing facility setting and involves active

participation by the interdisciplinary health-care team. The program facilitates the sys-

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tematic identification and appropriate management of residents with upper GI motility disorders, GERD or both by providing comprehensive educational materials, interdisciplinary

team communication strategies, therapeutic recommendations, and program implementation tools.

For more information about PharMerica's Upper GI Motility Disorders and GERD Management Program, call your PharMerica Consultant Pharmacist or our location nearest you.



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