Pharmacotherapy and Medication Management Resources from AOTA's Mental Health Special Interest Section Resource Library May 2026

Content generated by Allison F. Sullivan, DOT, MSOT, OTR/L

On Tuesday, May 19th, from 7:30 pm–8:30 pm ET, Carli DiMeo, OTD, OTR/L, BCP will host a Practice Chat sponsored by AOTA's Mental Health Special interest section. Carli will provide brief background information and case-based examples to facilitate discussion on the functional impact of psychiatric medication on occupational participation. Drawing connections across the lifespan while emphasizing childhood, this session will increase participants' awareness of the prevalence and occupational implications of psychiatric medication management. This session will provide an opportunity for dialogue concerning the occupational therapy practitioner's role in assessment, advocacy, and intervention to support clients' daily functioning and quality of life.

All are welcome and invited to attend. This practice chat will be recorded. Please use the following link to register: https://www.aota.org/events/calendar/mhsis-practice-chat

MHSIS Chair, Allison Sullivan, DOT, OTR/L, writes:

Psychiatric medications can significantly influence cognition, sensory processing, energy, emotional regulation, sleep, participation, and overall quality of life across the lifespan. While medication management is often viewed primarily through a biomedical lens, occupational therapy contributes a distinct functional perspective by examining how medication routines, side effects, health literacy, habits, environmental supports, and daily occupations interact to support or interfere with participation. Occupational therapy practitioners are uniquely positioned to promote medication safety, adherence, self-management, and meaningful engagement in daily life through occupation-based assessment, intervention, advocacy, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The following collection highlights evidence-based resources, assessment tools, intervention strategies, and educational media to support OT practitioners involved in psychiatric medication management across practice settings.

👥 Psychiatric Medication Management: Overview & Context

Psychiatric medication management involves supporting the safe, effective, and meaningful use of psychotropic medications to improve health, participation, and quality of life. Medication-related challenges may include side effects, cognitive barriers, sensory sensitivities, limited health literacy, regimen complexity, stigma, cost, and difficulties integrating medication routines into daily life. Occupational therapy practitioners can play an important role in assessing functional medication management skills, supporting habit formation and environmental organization, promoting self-advocacy and psychoeducation, and addressing the occupational impact of psychiatric medications within recovery-oriented and person-centered care models.

In support this May 19th MHSIS Practice Chat on Psychiatric Medication Management, the Mental Health Special Interest Section (MHSIS) is featuring the following curated resources from its member-created library:

🔎 Evidence-Based Practice in Psychiatric Medication Management:

Pillinger, T., Howes, O. D., Correll, C. U., Leucht, S., Huhn, M., Schneider-Thoma, J., Gaughran, F., Jauhar, S., McGuire, P. K., Taylor, D. M., Young, A. H., & McCutcheon, R. A. (2023). ***Antidepressant and antipsychotic side-effects and personalised prescribing: A systematic review and digital tool development.*** *The Lancet Psychiatry, 10*(11), 860–876. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(23)00262-6

National Elf Service. (2025). ***Physical health side effects of psychotropic medication: Holistic prevention and management.*** The Mental Elf. https://www.nationalelfservice.net/treatment/antipsychotics/physical-health-side-effects-of-psychotropic-medication-holistic-prevention-and-management/

50 years of SSRIs: weighing benefits and harms. (2025). *Lancet*, *405*(10490), 1641. https://doi-org.ezai.ez.cwmars.org:3243/10.1016/S0140-6736(25)00981-X

Patel, N. U., Moore, B. A., Craver, R. F., & Feldman, S. R. (2016). **Ethical considerations in adherence research.** *Patient Preference and Adherence, 10*, 2429–2435. https://doi.org/10.2147/PPA.S117802

📊 Value of Occupational Therapy in Psychiatric Medication Management:

Occupational therapy contributes uniquely to psychiatric medication management by addressing:

- Functional cognition and executive functioning related to medication routines
- Medication adherence and habit formation within daily occupations
- Sensory, cognitive, and behavioral side effects impacting participation
- Health literacy and understanding of medication instructions
- Environmental organization and medication safety strategies
- Daily routine development and time management supports
- Self-advocacy and communication with health care providers
- Fine motor, visual-perceptual, and process skills required for medication management
- Functional assessment of medication self-management capacity
- Recovery-oriented goal setting and quality of life outcomes
- Caregiver education and support for medication-related routines
- Interdisciplinary collaboration to optimize participation and treatment engagement

McCarthy, J., Hawkins, M., & Andrews, S. (2023). The Connelly House approach: occupational therapists facilitating the self-administration of medication in a psychiatric rehabilitation in-patient ward. *BJPsych bulletin*, *47*(5), 274–279. https://doi.org/10.1192/bjb.2022.62

Somerville, E., Bollinger, R., Keleman, A., Haxton, M., Sarrami, B., Chen, S. W., Holden, B., Yan, Y., & Stark, S. (2023). **Tailored medication management intervention delivered by occupational therapists for older adults: A study protocol**. *The British journal of occupational therapy*, *86*(4), 257–264. https://doi.org/10.1177/03080226221135366

Garrison, T. A., Schwartz, J. K., & Moore, E. S. (2023). Effect of occupational therapy in promoting medication adherence in primary care: A randomized controlled trial. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 77*(3), 7703205040. https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2023.050109

Allen, D. D., & Jaffe, L. (2024). A Survey of Medication Management in Occupational Therapy Practice. *Occupational Therapy In Health Care*, *38*(4), 932–945. https://doi.org/10.1080/07380577.2023.2243516

Assessment Tools:

Anderson, K., & Borson, S. (n.d.). ***Medi-Cog™.*** University of Maryland School of Pharmacy. https://www.pharmacy.umaryland.edu/centers/lamy/clinical-initiatives/medmanagement/assisted_living/Tools-to-Assess-Self-Administration-of-Medication/: The **Medi-Cog** is a seven-minute tool, which can be used by health care providers to assess cognitive literacy and pillbox skills in order to optimize medication safety. The tool is a combination of the Mini-Cog©, a validated cognitive screen, and the Medication Transfer Screen (MTS), a pillbox skills test. This tool was developed by Katherine Anderson, PharmD.

Orwig, D., Brandt, N., & Gruber-Baldini, A. L. (2006). Medication management assessment for older adults in the community. *The Gerontologist*, *46*(5), 661–668. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/46.5.661 : **Medication Management Instrument for Deficiencies on the Elderly (MedMaIDE™):** The **MedMaIDE™** tool is used to assess the ability to self-administer medications within the aging population. It examines how much the person knows about their medications, if they know how to take their medications, and if they know how to procure their medications. The tool also provides a section for the individual's complete medication list. This tool was developed by Denise Orwig, PhD, Nicole Brandt, PharmD, and Ann Gruber-Baldini, PhD.

Albert, S. M., Edelstein, O. E., & Park, H. (2020). *The Self-Medication Assessment Tool (SMAT): Development, reliability, and validity*. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy, 16*(8), 1035–1041. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2019.11.003: The **Self-Medication Assessment Tool (SMAT)** is a comprehensive instrument intended to screen for medication self-management deficits in older adults and to facilitate targeted interventions.

George, J., Phun, Y. T., Bailey, M. J., Kong, D. C., & Stewart, K. (2004). Development and validation of the medication regimen complexity index. *The Annals of pharmacotherapy*, *38*(9), 1369–1376. https://doi.org/10.1345/aph.1D479 : The Medication Regimen Complexity Index (MRCI) is a validated 65-item clinical tool used to objectively quantify how difficult a patient's drug regimen is to manage. It goes beyond a simple count of medications by assigning specific weights to factors that drive adherence challenges and errors.

Baby, B., McKinnon, A., Patterson, K., Patel, H., Sharma, R., Carter, C., Griffin, R., Burns, C., Chang, F., Guilcher, S. J., Lee, L., Fadaleh, S. A., & Patel, T. (2024). Tools to measure barriers to medication management capacity in older adults: a scoping review. *BMC geriatrics*, *24*(1), 285. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-024-04893-7

Psychiatric Medication Management Intervention Resources

American Psychiatric Association. (2025). Psychiatric medications: An overview. https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/psychiatric-medications-an-overview-1

American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists. (2019, February). *Adherence*. https://www.nami.org/treatments-and-approaches/mental-health-medications/medication-plan-adherence/

Baby, B., McKinnon, A., Patterson, K., Patel, H., Sharma, R., Carter, C., Griffin, R., Burns, C., Chang, F., Guilcher, S. J., Lee, L., Fadaleh, S. A., & Patel, T. (2024). Tools to measure barriers to medication management capacity in older adults: a scoping review. *BMC geriatrics*, *24*(1), 285. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-024-04893-7

🎧 Related Podcast & YouTube Resources

Pharmacology: Antidepressants - SSRIs, SNRIs, TCAs, MAOIs: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T25jvLC6X0w

Anxiety Medications - Pharmacology @LevelUpRN: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3Q4DrvwjQo

In this 2020 YouTube video, Cathy Parkes, BSN, RN, covers medications that are used to treat anxiety, including benzodiazepines and buspirone.

Bipolar Medications: Therapies - Psychiatric Mental Health @LevelUpRN: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8JyrnsL5Ok

In this 2023 YouTube video, Cathy Parkes, BSN, RN covers key medications used in the treatment of bipolar disorder, including lithium, carbamazepine, and valproic acid. For lithium, she discusses the side effects, contraindications, signs/symptoms of toxicity, interactions, nursing care, and patient teaching associated with lithium. For carbamazepine and valproic acid, Cathy discusses the mode of action, key side effects, and nursing care associated with these medications. At the end of the video, she provides a quiz to test your knowledge of some of the key points she covers in the video.

Psycho-pharmacotherapies in Pediatric Patients UCONN Student Health Fair 2022: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3H73XwdzPE

In this video, UConn students Sindy Yang, Anna Liu, Nathalie Brown, and Katie Meehan discuss the use of psycho-active medications in pediatric patients, including the common conditions they are used to treat, the medications in this class that are most used, as well as the statistics on overuse of these medications.

Medications for Substance Use Disorders @LevelUpRN: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COeGP7EKv2A

In this 2023 YouTube video, Cathy Parkes BSN, RN covers medications used for substance use disorders, including alcohol use disorder (disulfiram, naltrexone, acamprosate) and opioid use disorder (buprenorphine, methadone). She also discusses medications that support smoking cessation (varenicline, buproprion). At the end of the video, Cathy provides a quiz to test your knowledge of some of the key points she covered in the video.

Medications for Schizophrenia: Therapies - Psychiatric Mental Health @LevelUpRN: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnmOpGoGZYw

In this 2024 YouTube video, Cathy Parkes, BSN, RN, discusses antipsychotic medications used in the treatment of schizophrenia, including first generation (typical) and second generation (atypical) antipsychotics. She covers the side effects and nursing care for each medication class. Cathy also provides a more in-depth discussion of two important antipsychotic side effects: extrapyramidal symptoms and neuroleptic malignant syndrome. At the end of the video, she provides a quiz to test your knowledge of key points she covered in the video.