

If the family feels strongly that your family member should remain on the drug, despite the healthcare team's recommendation, arrangements can be made to provide the drug. The resident or family would then be responsible for payment.

Please feel free to discuss any questions you may have with the physician, nursing staff, or pharmacist.



Information for Residents and Families
Regarding Acetylcholinesterase Inhibitors
(Donepezil [Aricept®], Galantamine [Reminyl®],
Rivastigmine [Exelon®])
and
Their Use in Southern Health-Santé Sud

Introduction

Southern Health-Santé Sud strives to provide the best possible care for all PCH residents. An important part of the care is ensuring the appropriate use of drugs, with all drugs that residents take carefully reviewed on admission, and during the residents stay. One such group of drugs are called Acetylcholinesterase Inhibitors (Aricept, Exelon, and Reminyl).

What are Acetylcholinesterase Inhibitors

Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors are a class of medications prescribed for Alzheimer's Disease and dementia. These medications are usually started with the goal of allowing patients with Alzheimer's Disease or dementia to remain in their home. These medications have been shown to slow the worsening

of Alzheimer's Disease and delay admission to the Personal Care Home (PCH). Unfortunately, current expert medical knowledge has demonstrated that these drugs do not alter the overall course of Alzheimer's Disease. In other words, patients will still end up with severe memory impairment, but it may occur over a longer period of time. There are few studies of the effects of acetylcholinesterase inhibitors on residents of PCHs, and these studies show some minimal benefit for memory, but no benefit for day-to-day functioning, behaviour or improved quality of life. Moreover, acetylcholinesterase inhibitors have been associated with side effects such as difficulty sleeping, agitation and aggression as the disease progresses, and may not contribute to the patient's well being in later stages of the disease.

What do studies show?

There are no studies that tell us the best time to stop taking these drugs. Stopping them and monitoring the patient's mental status is the only way to find out whether it is worthwhile to continue it for an individual. Studies show that restarting the drug within six weeks of stopping it, can reverse most changes, if they were to occur.

What to expect upon admission to PCH?

Admission to a Personal Care Home most often occurs when a person can no longer manage to live at home with home care and/or family support. Admission can be a disruptive and emotional experience, while the fears and anxieties for both families and residents may be increased. With that in mind, individuals receiving Aricept, Exelon, or Reminyl at home will receive the drug for three months after admission. Following the three-month period, the drug will be tapered over the course of one month and then stopped, with a similar process being applied to current residents. All residents being tapered and discontinued from acetylcholinesterase inhibitors will be observed carefully by staff at the PCH for any change in mood, social behaviour, or ability to function. The physician, nurse and pharmacists working with the PCH will determine if any notable changes have occurred with the discontinuation of the drug. If negative changes have been noted, the drug can be restarted. However, if no deterioration is noted, the drug would be considered unnecessary, and would not be re-ordered.