

Development of outpatient protocol for specialist led/physician supervised treatment for tobacco dependence

Introduction

The Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center (NDC) model for tobacco dependence treatment employs a master level allied health professional as a primary clinician under the supervision of a physician. In order to assure high-quality patient care with appropriate medical oversight the NDC has implemented a set of medication protocols. Protocols are in effect for each of the first-line medications approved for treating tobacco dependence. Each protocol clearly defines a physician supervised process by which an NDC Counselor can provide patient assessment, screening for contraindications and recommendations regarding these medications.

Following is an outline of the important factors and considerations that guided the development of the NDC medication protocols. The development of these protocols was based upon policies, procedures, and patient needs that are pertinent to the Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center. These are not intended to apply to any other health care providers or health delivery systems outside of the Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center.

Personnel

Tobacco dependence treatment at the NDC is supervised by a physician. Assessment, patient education, and treatment planning are provided by Master Level Counselors who are trained as tobacco treatment specialists (TTS). During training the specialist participates in didactic, reading and review, clinical observation and supervision to become competent to provide patient education, screen for contraindications, and make appropriate recommendations regarding the seven first line medications for treating tobacco dependence.

Factors considered in developing the medication protocol

- Patient safety – Assured through physician oversight and education and supervision of the allied health staff.
- Capacity and value – Master level clinicians can provide high value evidence based tobacco dependence treatment to a large number of patients.
- Scope of practice – Non prescribers need to have clear guidelines and physician oversight to discuss pharmacotherapy use with patients.

Protocol development

- Nicotine Dependence Center physicians developed a set of guidelines for allied health staff to screen patients for contraindications for the use of first-line tobacco dependence treatment medications and to provide dosing specifications for nicotine replacement medicine based upon amount of tobacco use.
- These guidelines were discussed with the NDC allied health and physicians staff and collaboratively adapted to assure that patient needs would be met and that sufficient oversight was in place.
- The final draft of the guidelines was reviewed extensively with the allied health staff.

Development of outpatient protocol for specialist led/physician supervised treatment for tobacco dependence

Protocol procedures

- Patient medication needs that fall within the scope of the guidelines were approved so that the allied health practitioner could discuss recommendations with the patient and forward to the supervising physician for approval.
- The electronic clinical record was adapted to provide confidential communication with a supervising physician regarding each patient's suggested medications, enable the physician to review the patient's medical chart in a timely way, prescribe the medication, and forward it to the support staff for delivery to the patient.
- Any medication needs that are outside the parameters defined in the protocol need to be discussed with the supervising physician prior to making any recommendations to the patient. In those cases the allied health staff is instructed to contact the physician on call.