

UNDERSTANDING COMMON DRUG CLASSES AND THEIR SIDE EFFECTS

The role of medicines

No one needs to be told about the vital role medicines play in managing diseases, relieving symptoms and improving quality of life. What needs to be highlighted though is that medicines can come with side effects. That is why understanding the common classes of drugs and their potential effects is crucial for nurses for safe and effective use. This is also the reason a lot of stress is placed on educating nurses in this regard in Neotia Nursing Academy. The following are the primary classes of drugs:

Pain Relievers (Analgesics)

Pain is usually managed with over-the-counter drugs like paracetamol and ibuprofen, as well as prescription opioids. Paracetamol is usually safe but may harm the liver in high doses. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen can cause stomach irritation, ulcers or kidney problems if overused. Opioids can cause drowsiness, constipation and dependence.

Antibiotics

Antibiotics are commonly prescribed to fight bacterial infections. While lifesaving, they can have side effects like diarrhoea, nausea or allergic reactions. Overuse or misuse contributes to antibiotic resistance which is a growing global concern. It is important that patients always complete the full prescribed course, even if they feel better.

Antihypertensives

These are drugs that control high blood pressure and include beta-blockers, ACE inhibitors and diuretics, each with their own side-effects. Beta-blockers can cause fatigue and cold hands, while ACE inhibitors can lead to a persistent dry cough. Diuretics, which help the body remove excess fluid, can increase urination and sometimes cause electrolyte imbalances.

Antidepressants

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and related drugs are often used to treat depression and anxiety. Common side effects include nausea, sleep changes and



sexual difficulties. These may improve over time and one should not stop these medicines suddenly without medical advice.

Antidiabetic Medications

For diabetics, drugs such as metformin and insulin are crucial. Metformin may cause stomach upset, while insulin carries a risk of low blood sugar if not balanced properly with meals and activity. Careful monitoring is essential to avoid complications.

Precautions worth taking

While nearly all medicines have side effects, they are usually mild and manageable. Patients need to immediately report to their doctor if anything unusual occurs. Also one should never self-medicate and always follow prescribed doses. Reading labels, asking questions and being aware of possible interactions with other medicines or alcohol are useful practices.

Making the most of medicines

At Neotia Nursing Academy, it is understood that to be truly effective drugs must be used responsibly. For this students are provided detailed instructions and guidance to aid them in the future. A thorough knowledge of common drug classes is vital for every nurse.