

Hypertension and Mental Illness

Overview

Casey Williams, MD

Hypertension and Mental Illness

- A consumer with a systolic blood pressure greater than 140 mm Hg. and/or a diastolic blood pressure greater than 90 mm Hg. on three separate readings should be diagnosed with hypertension. Even if only one number (systolic or diastolic) is consistently above normal, the consumer should be diagnosed with hypertension.
- Although hypertension does not occur any more frequently in consumers with mental illness, the fact that such consumers have a lot of other risk factors for developing hypertension suggests that case managers should screen every individual with mental illness for hypertension and should assure that proper care is delivered to those diagnosed
- If a consumer has multiple elevated blood pressure readings but has NOT been diagnosed with hypertension, the case manager should refer this consumer to a health care professional for an official evaluation and management plan.
- Although it is NOT the responsibility of the case manager to screen for other (secondary) cause of hypertension, the case manager will need to assure that every consumer with mental illness that is diagnosed with hypertension has had a thorough physical and the following laboratory tests: chemistry (or metabolic) profile that includes a sodium, potassium and creatinine level, a blood count, thyroid function tests, an electrocardiogram (ECG), and a chest x-ray.
- The case manager should assure that every consumer with mental illness and hypertension that also has: (a) diabetes or heart failure is on an ACE-inhibitor, (b) sustained a heart attack is on a beta-blocker, or (c) is a geriatric consumer with isolated systolic high blood pressure is on a low dose diuretic. These medications should be started on such consumers provided there are no medical contra-indications for doing so.
- Although it clearly is beyond the capacity of the case manager to screen for complications of hypertension, the case manager should determine if any health care professional did perform the proper screening for such complications and then document what was and was not done.
- Educating consumers about hypertension can be a very powerful tool in improving adherence to medications and in decreasing future medical complications.