

Public Awareness of Inappropriate Medications in the Senior Population

Choosing Wisely Recommendations

1. Don't use benzodiazepines or other sedative-hypnotics in older adults as first choice for insomnia, agitation, or delirium.
2. Don't maintain long-term proton pump inhibitor (PPI) therapy for gastrointestinal symptoms without an attempt to stop/reduce PPI at least once per year in most patients.

Practice Points

1. NL has some of the highest use of potentially harmful medications across the country, including sedatives and PPIs. The long-term use of these medications continues to rise.
2. Only 17% of patients prescribed “reflux medications” and 15% prescribed “sleeping pills” recall their physician, pharmacist, or nurse practitioner talking to them about deprescribing their reflux medication or sleeping pills in the previous 12 months.
3. The Canadian Deprescribing Network (CaDeN) and SaferMedsNL bring together patient advocates, community organizations, health care professionals, and academic researchers to improve medication use through deprescribing (or safely stopping) potentially harmful or unnecessary medications.
4. SaferMedsNL is raising public awareness about the benefit and harms of medications in NL with a province-wide public awareness campaign to promote meaningful conversations between health care professionals and patients to ensure medications are continued when necessary and safely stopped when they are no longer needed.

Data

A Public survey was conducted by the Canadian Deprescribing Network and SaferMedsNL to ask people aged ≥ 65 years (n=2,300 across Canada, n=443 across NL) about medication safety.

Results

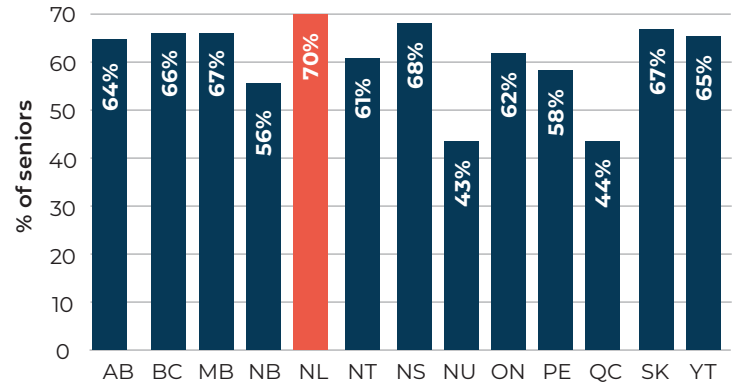


Figure 1. Per Cent of Seniors who had Heard that Some Medications Might be Harmful When Prescribed to Seniors, by Province, 2020

- In 2020, NL was the province with the highest awareness that some medications, such as long-term use of PPIs and sedatives, can be harmful when used by seniors (70%).

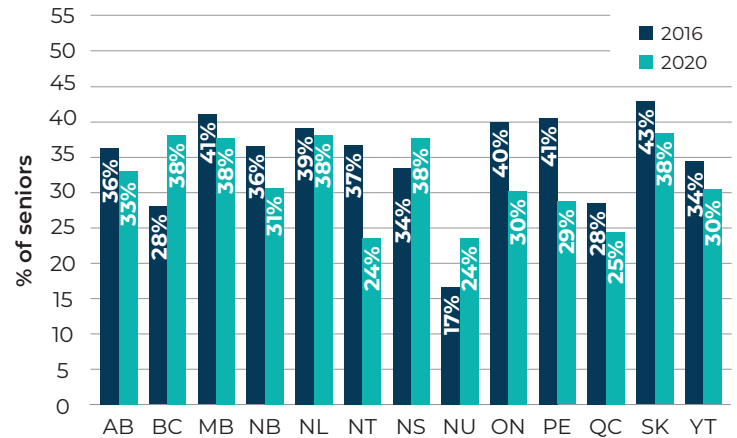


Figure 2. The Proportion of Seniors Who Knew Sleeping Pills may be Harmful if Overused, by Province, 2016 vs 2020

- In NL, between 2016 to 2020, there was no significant change in the number of seniors who know that “sleeping pills” may be harmful: 39% in 2016 to 38% in 2020.

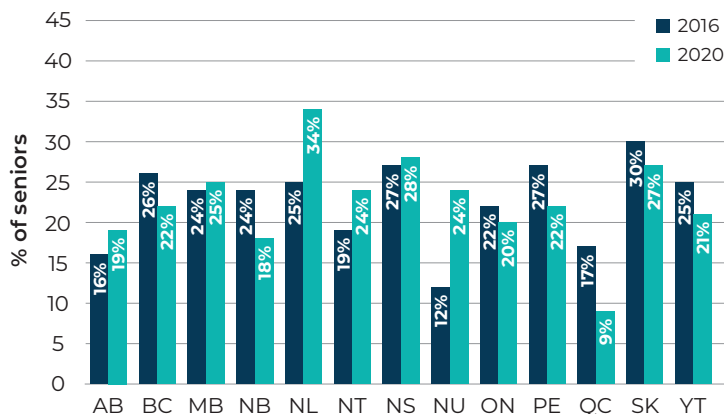


Figure 3. The Proportion of Seniors Who Knew Reflux Medications may be Harmful if Overused, by Province, 2016 vs 2020

- There was a significant increase in the number of seniors in NL who knew reflux medications may be harmful if overused, increasing from 25% in 2016 to 34% in 2020.

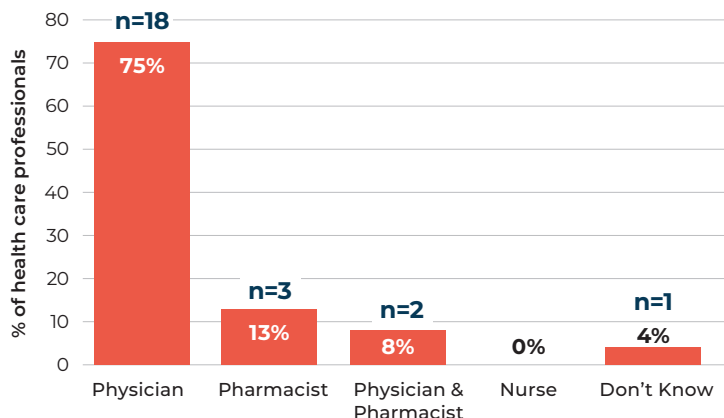


Figure 4. The Healthcare Professions that Talked to Patients About De-prescribing, 2020

- When participants who were taking reflux medications or sleeping pills recalled that a health care professional advised them to stop their medications, the majority of the time they remembered it was a Physician who provided this advice.

Conclusions

1. Despite a high awareness of the harmful effects of prescription medications, NL has a high rate of long-term use of benzodiazepines (80/1,000 using them >3 months) and PPIs (267/1,000 people using them ≥ 12 months) in the senior population.
2. Awareness of the inappropriate or harmful use of specific medications, such as sedative-hypnotics and PPIs, remains low. Future public awareness campaigns are planned and aim to increase awareness.
3. Although Choosing Wisely Canada recommends against long-term use of sedatives and PPIs in most older adults, few patients remember their health care provider talking to them about stopping their medications.