



Misuse of Antipsychotic Medications Sample Letter to the Editor

<Name of Media Outlet or Publication>

<Attention: >

<Address 1>

< Address 2>

<City>, <State> <Zip or Postal Code>

Dear Editor,

I'm writing to draw attention to a growing problem in the United States: the misuse of antipsychotic medications in nursing homes. Antipsychotic medications are often prescribed to control or limit certain "behaviors" in residents with dementia that may be considered problematic, instead of properly assessing the needs of the resident or reasons for the behaviors and then addressing them through proper care.

The median use for antipsychotics in U.S. nursing homes for residents without psychosis or related conditions is 16.7%. Antipsychotic drugs, when prescribed for elderly persons with dementia, can have serious medical complications including death, the loss of independence, over-sedation, confusion and falls. The Food and Drug Administration has issued "Black Box" warnings that antipsychotics greatly increase the risk of death in persons with dementia.

The federal government is recognizing this dangerous problem and taking action. In May the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in the Cabinet for Health and Human Services announced that it will try to get states to reduce the misuse of antipsychotics by 15% by the end of this year. In addition to the government's efforts, we need to ensure that nursing homes are hiring enough staff to adequately care for residents, that proper assessment and care planning is done for each resident, and that staff is engaging in person-centered care practices and employing other than chemical restraints. Moreover, families need to know about the dangers of these medications when misused and how to plan for prevention.

If you think your loved one might be the victim of the misuse of antipsychotic medications, question what types of medication they're on and why. If the problem persists, contact your local ombudsman. You can find your local ombudsman program by going to www.ltombudsman.org. In addition, refer to www.theconsumervoice.org or <http://www.ncea.aoa.gov> for more information and resources.

Sincerely,

<Writer's Signature>

<Name of Writer>

<Writer's Title>

<Writer's Organization >

**** NOTE:** All letters to the editor must include a signature, address, and phone number so the paper may contact you with any questions. You should also include your affiliation with an organization if applicable. Your phone number and address will not be printed.