

# The Mumbling Lady

Side Effects Case

1

## Presentation

- 69-year-old female with Alzheimer's disease
- Over the last few days she has grown confused, slurred speech, gait changes with near falls, sedation
- No change in her back and knee pain when awake and alert

2

## Medical History

- High blood pressure
- Arthritis in her knees
- Heart disease
- Depression
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Diabetes
- Hypothyroidism
- Constipation
- Disk disease in her back

3

## Medications

- Metoprolol
- Aspirin
- Ultram
- Elavil
- Paroxetine
- Gabapentin
- Synthroid
- Colace
- Calcium plus vitamin D
- Benedryl
- Senna

4

## Acute Problems

- Last week
  - Increased pain
    - Ultram added as a standing dose medication as well as prn
  - Nighttime awakening
    - About 1-3am
      - Doesn't return to bed until 5 or 6 am
      - Benedryl added
      - Ambien caused a rash previously

5

## Medical Workup

- Vitals normal except blood pressure low
  - Some readings 80/50 range
- Laboratory all normal
  - Thyroid, electrolytes, CBC, urinalysis, B12
- Radiology
  - CT scan without acute findings
- New medications
  - Ultram
  - Benedryl (diphenhydramine)

6

## Nursing Management

- Reported to the provider the change in condition immediately
- Maintained a sleep chart to provide information about wake and sleep during the day and night
- Established fall precautions
- Daily orthostatic blood pressure and pulse to assess whether orthostasis is the reason for falls

7

## Nursing Management

- Monitored eating to look for choking with the development of slurred speech
- Looked for weakness on side of the body or facial droop
- Assessed possibility of constipation
- DON discussed new findings with nurses and CNAs on all three shifts

8

## Plan

- Likely a delirium
  - Ultram
    - Recently added
      - Can cause delirium
    - Discontinued and acetaminophen added
  - Anticholinergic agents
    - Cause delirium often in dementia
      - Taken paroxetine for years
      - Amitriptyline used at very low dose for pain and also on board for over a year
      - Diphenhydramine given over the last three days
        - Discontinued immediately

9

## Outcome

- Delirium cleared
  - Pain under fair control with acetaminophen
    - Ultram not added back
  - Diphenhydramine discontinued
    - Consider changing paroxetine to another antidepressant
    - Contemplate nortriptyline rather than amitriptyline
    - Monitor sleeping led to nonpharmacologic interventions which aided sleep

10