

September 22, 2004

**GUIDANCE CONCERNING THE PRESCRIBING OF ATYPICAL  
ANTIPSYCHOTIC MEDICATIONS**

- 1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Notice, on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, informs all physicians, facility Directors and pharmacy managers that atypical anti-psychotic pharmaceutical prescribing practices are not to be used as a measure of performance.
- 2.** Report language contained in the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 Appropriations Act directed the Secretary to inform all physicians, facility Directors and pharmacy managers that atypical anti-psychotic pharmaceutical prescribing practices are not to be used as a measure of performance, and to reiterate existing VA's policy that physicians are to use their best clinical judgment when choosing anti-psychotic medications. This VHA Notice serves to convey VA's response to the Appropriations Act Report Language.
- 3.** The Report language also requested that the VA feel free to communicate relative cost data for all atypical anti-psychotic medications to physicians due to the wide price disparity that exists between the currently available anti-psychotic medications.
- 4.** In addition, the Report language directs that VA keep an open policy with regard to formulating new schizophrenia and serious mental illness treatment protocols as new treatments become available. As with all other VHA clinical care protocols, these new protocols will be based on scientific and clinical studies showing improvements in treatment efficacy or a decrease in side-effects, with cost savings as a subordinate goal to appropriate treatment options.
- 5. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Office of Patient Care Services (119) is responsible for the contents of this Notice. Questions may be addressed to (202) 273-8429.
- 6. RESCISSIONS:** This VHA Notice rescinds VHA Notice 2002-01, January 16, 2002. This VHA Notice expires on September 30, 2008.

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