

## Newsletter—August 2013



### *Elderly At Risk for Prescription Drug Abuse*

**Prescription Drug Abuse** among seniors has become a major concern for health care professionals. A recent Mount Sinai Hospital survey found that 30% of people sixty years and older take five or more prescription drugs. Most alarming is the increase in the number of hospital admissions for prescription drug abuse. Between 1997 and 2008, the admission rate increased 96% for seniors 60—84. In the same period the rate for seniors 85 and older increased by 87%. The most common side affect is drug induced delirium and dementia.

**Why are seniors taking prescription drugs?** The Mount Sinai survey identified the most common physical ailments were joint pain, pain from falls, and trouble sleeping. Also noted were treatment for sadness over the loss of a loved one and for sadness caused by separation from family and friends.

**What are some commons signs that someone may have a prescription drug dependence problem?** The person is constantly thinking about the drugs. Also, there is an unreasonable fear about running out of the drug. Another warning sign is taking the medication at different times and in different doses than prescribed by the physician.

If a person is concerned about an elderly person that shows symptoms of Alzheimer Disease or other dementias., they should be tested to determine if the symptoms are caused by prescription drug abuse.

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