PRESCRIBING CASCADES IN OLDER ADULTS: A GUIDE FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

What is a prescribing cascade?

When the side effect of a drug is misinterpreted for a new medical condition, resulting in the prescription of another medication.

Pain and inflammation → Medication A (NSAIDs) → Side effect: hypertension → Medication B (Antihypertensive) → and so on!

What’s the problem?

If prescribing recommendations are followed for each issue separately, older adults may be given medications that increase their risk for adverse drug events and interactions.

What to do?

Review the medications!

Factors to consider as a healthcare provider...

- Is the first medication the only option to treat the original condition?
  - Can the dose be reduced?
- Can the side effects of the first drug be managed without the second drug?
  - How severe is the side effect?
- Does the patient need drug therapy?

To identify other clinically important prescribing cascades, visit the link below:

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9477172/

To learn more, read: Five things to know about prescribing cascades in older adults

https://www.cmaj.ca/content/193/6/E215