Nursing Process

Assessment

- Assess the client's condition in relation to disorders in which antiadrenergic drugs are used. Because most of the drugs are used to treat hypertension, assess blood pressure patterns over time, when possible, including antihypertensive drugs used and the response obtained. With other cardiovascular disorders, check blood pressure for elevation and pulse for tachycardia or arrhythmia, and determine the presence or absence of chest pain, migraine headache, or hyperthyroidism. If the client reports or medical records indicate one or more of these disorders, assess for specific signs and symptoms. With BPH, assess for signs and symptoms of urinary retention and difficulty voiding.
- Assess for conditions that contraindicate the use of antiadrenergic drugs.
- Assess vital signs to establish a baseline for later comparisons.
- Assess for use of prescription and nonprescription drugs that are likely to increase or decrease effects of antiadrenergic drugs.
- Assess for lifestyle habits that are likely to increase or decrease effects of antiadrenergic drugs (eg, ingestion of caffeine or nicotine).

Nursing Diagnoses

- Decreased Cardiac Output related to drug-induced postural hypotension (alpha$_2$ agonists, alpha$_1$ and nonselective alpha-blocking agents, and beta blockers) and worsening heart failure (beta blockers)
- Impaired Gas Exchange related to drug-induced bronchoconstriction with beta blockers
- Sexual Dysfunction in men related to impotence and decreased libido
- Fatigue related to decreased cardiac output
- Noncompliance with drug therapy related to adverse drug effects or inadequate understanding of drug regimen
- Risk for Injury related to hypotension, dizziness, sedation
- Deficient Knowledge of drug effects and safe usage

Planning/Goals

The client will:

- Receive or self-administer drugs accurately
- Experience relief of symptoms for which antiadrenergic drugs are given
- Comply with instructions for safe drug usage
- Avoid stopping antiadrenergic drugs abruptly
- Demonstrate knowledge of adverse drug effects to be reported
- Avoid preventable adverse drug effects
- Keep appointments for blood pressure monitoring and other follow-up activities

Interventions

Use measures to prevent or decrease the need for antiadrenergic drugs. Because the sympathetic nervous system is stimulated by physical and emotional stress, efforts to decrease stress may indirectly decrease the need for drugs to antagonize sympathetic effects. Such efforts may include the following:

- Helping the client stop or decrease cigarette smoking. Nicotine stimulates the CNS and the sympathetic nervous system to cause tremors, tachycardia, and elevated blood pressure.
- Teaching measures to relieve pain, anxiety, and other stresses
- Counseling regarding relaxation techniques
- Helping the client avoid temperature extremes
- Helping the client avoid excessive caffeine in coffee or other beverages
- Helping the client develop a reasonable balance among rest, exercise, work, and recreation
- Recording vital signs at regular intervals in hospitalized clients to monitor for adverse effects
- Helping with activity or ambulation as needed to prevent injury from dizziness

Evaluation

- Observe for decreased blood pressure when antiadrenergic drugs are given for hypertension.
- Interview regarding decreased chest pain when beta blockers are given for angina.
- Interview and observe for signs and symptoms of adverse drug effects (eg, edema, tachycardia with alpha agonists and blocking agents; bradycardia, congestive heart failure, bronchoconstriction with beta blockers).
- Interview regarding knowledge and use of drugs.

PRINCIPLES OF THERAPY

Alpha-Adrenergic Agonists and Blocking Agents

1. When an alpha$_1$-blocking agent (doxazosin, prazosin, or terazosin) is given for hypertension, "first-dose syncope" may occur from hypotension. This reaction can be prevented or minimized by starting with a low dose, increasing the dose gradually, and giving the first dose at bedtime. In addition, the decreased blood pressure stimulates reflex mechanisms to raise blood pressure (increase heart rate and cardiac output, fluid retention) so that a diuretic may be needed.
2. A client diagnosed with BPH should be evaluated for prostatic cancer before starting drug therapy because the signs and symptoms of the two conditions are similar. The two conditions may also coexist.
3. When an alpha$_2$ agonist is given for hypertension, it is very important not to stop the drug abruptly because of the risk of rebound hypertension. To discontinue cloni-