

MEDICATIONS Prescriber Handout

Ruben Halperin
Medical Director, Portland, Oregon Metropolitan Area

“And while we are on the subject of medication you always need to look at risk versus benefit.” – Temple Grandin



www.oregonpainguidance.org/paineducationtoolkitforclinicians/medications

Success in prescribing requires taking a consistent and systematic approach. The following steps can help you reduce risks and maximize benefits for your patients.



1. INITIAL EVALUATION

History and physical with complete psychosocial history
Assess baseline function and pain levels
Review records, PDMP and UDS (even if you haven't decided whether to prescribe opioids)



2. CHOOSING MEDICATIONS

Consider the patient's type of pain and which classes of medications are appropriate.
Consider the patient's medical history and individual risk profile – there are several risk assessment tools to assess risk of opioid abuse
Consider medications that treat comorbidities that affect the pain experience



3. SETTING PATIENT EXPECTATIONS

Establish treatment goals: Define Success!

- The goal is to improve patient function
- Complete elimination of pain as a goal is unrealistic and may lead patients to give up on effective treatments

Establish a timeline: It can take weeks for medications to demonstrate benefit

Describe possible side effects: minor and severe

Create a medication agreement: include parameters for monitoring progress and discontinuing treatment



4. STARTING MEDICATIONS

Start doses low and titrate slowly to minimize side effects

5. MONITORING

Maintain appropriate follow-up frequency
Titrate dose to maximize benefits
Review PDMP (state drug monitoring program)
Decide on UDS frequency



6. TAPERING AND DISCONTINUING MEDICATIONS

To learn when and how to taper safely and effectively, I recommend the BRAVO framework which is linked here

<https://www.oregonpainguidance.org/guideline/tapering/>

