

# Polypharmacy: Use of Multiple CNS-Active Medications in Older Adults

Displayed as: Polypharmacy CNS-Active

This measure quantifies the percentage of patients aged 65 years or older with concurrent use of  $\geq 3$  unique central-nervous system (CNS)-active medications for  $\geq 30$  cumulative days during the measurement year.

- CNS-active medications include prescription opioid cough medications and exclude buprenorphine products indicated for opioid use disorder.

## Did You Know?



Psychotropic polypharmacy is dangerous for older adults due to increased risks of falls, cognitive decline, and respiratory suppression or death.<sup>2</sup>



Antipsychotic medications and opioid combinations are more strongly associated with mortality.<sup>1,2</sup>



For patients who have been hospitalized, each additional CNS-active medication they are prescribed increases their 12-month mortality risk by 14%. Rates of all-cause hospital readmission and drug-related readmissions increase by 7% with each additional CNS-active medication.<sup>1</sup>

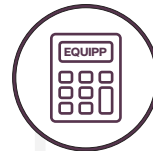
## Exclusions

- Enrolled in hospice care
- Seizure disorder diagnosis

## Therapeutic Categories\*

- Antidepressants
- Antiepileptics
- Antipsychotics
- Benzodiazepines and Nonbenzodiazepine Sedative/Hypnotics
- Opioids
- Skeletal muscle relaxants

\*injectables, inhaled products, and buprenorphine products for the treatment of OUD are not included



## Calculation

**NUMERATOR =**

The number of patients with concurrent use for  $\geq 30$  days of  $\geq 3$  unique CNS-active medications, each with  $\geq 2$  prescription claims on different dates of service

**DENOMINATOR =**

The number of patients with  $\geq 2$  prescription claims for the same CNS-active medication on different dates of service during the measurement year

<sup>1</sup>Stuber MJ, Brockhus LA, Spinewine A, et al. Central nervous system-active medications and risk of hospital readmission in older multimorbid adults. J Am Geriatr Soc. 2025;73(10):3113-3122. doi:10.1111/jgs.70049.

<sup>2</sup>Vordenberg SE, Davis RC, Strominger J, et al. Clinician contributions to central nervous system-active polypharmacy among older adults with dementia in the United States. J Am Geriatr Soc. 2024;73(2). doi:10.1111/jgs.19256.