

Insomnia in Palliative Care

Assess

Ask about:

Normal routine upset
Night time sedation used
Disturbing thoughts
Fear of going to sleep
Number of awakenings
Quality of sleep
Dreams/ hallucinations/ nightmares
Daytime drowsiness

Reversible causes

Anxiety
Depression
Delirium
Physical symptoms e.g. breathlessness, pain, itch, sweats, cramps, nausea, urinary frequency
Drugs

Drugs, e.g.

Diuretics
Steroids
Caffeine
Propranolol
Theophyllines
Sympathomimetics
Drug withdrawal

Treatment

1. Address cause if possible
2. Sleep hygiene plan - promote appropriate sleep pattern; avoid coffee etc.
3. Relaxation techniques - occupational therapy and physiotherapy can help
4. Medication: see below - review usual medication
5. Lavender (essential oil)- not prescribable but might be recommended to patients e.g. drops on pillow

Medication		Dose		Comment
Hypnotic	temazepam	10-40mg	nocte	starting dose 10mg
Sedative	haloperidol	0.5-3.0mg	nocte	useful if altered sensorium and if agitated
Adjuncts	amitriptyline	25-100mg	nocte	sedative antidepressant
	desmopressin	100-300microgram	nocte	reduces nocturnal urinary frequency
	quinine	200 - 300mg	nocte	leg cramps
	baclofen	5-10mg	nocte	leg jerking