



## Prescription of Psychotropic Medication

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Within the last 100 years, the treatment of patients suffering from mental illnesses has been revolutionized by the use of psychotropic medications. The health care system is challenged by increasing complexity and resource limitations. Advances in medication therapies have relieved the suffering of countless patients, and enabled them to lead more independent lives. Indeed, psychiatric treatment innovations have rivalled innovations in all other fields of medicine.

While the benefits of medications are clear, their use must be tempered by the potential for adverse consequences. All medications can have side effects, and psychotropic medications are no exception. All medications can interact with other medications and cause problems with concurrent illnesses and treatments. In addition, proper diagnosis is essential to ensure the appropriate medication is prescribed. To avoid potential harm, it is imperative that the prescription of psychotropic medication be done by

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Note: It is the policy of the Canadian Psychiatric Association to review each position paper, policy statement and clinical practice guideline every five years after publication or last review. Any such document that has been published more than five years ago and does not explicitly state it has been reviewed and retained as an official document of the CPA, either with revisions or as originally published, should be considered as a historical reference document only.

people qualified to both diagnose and treat mental illnesses in the context of the patient's complete mental and physical health status.

To that end, the Canadian Psychiatric Association affirms that only medical doctors possess the unique expertise to prescribe medications for medical illnesses, including psychiatric disorders. Medical doctors receive the necessary comprehensive training in sciences such as pharmacology, physiology, biochemistry,

and anatomy, as well as extensive clinical training in various medical disciplines, which ensures adequate standards. Prescribers who have had limited training in a specific area may not recognize the dangerous potential complications, medical comorbidities, and medication interactions that can occur with psychotropic medications. Accordingly, the Association feels that patient safety is best assured when only medical doctors are allowed to prescribe independently.