6.1: Introduction

Learning Objectives

• Relate the anatomy and physiology of the central nervous system to mental health disorders and psychotropic medications
• Describe patient education for classes of psychotropic medications

Psychotropic medications are medications that affect the mind, emotions, and behavior. This chapter will review the anatomy and physiology of the central nervous system (CNS) as it relates to mental health disorders and medications and then discuss several classes of psychotropic medications.

Be aware that information about medications changes frequently, and it is vital for nurses to consult evidence-based resources for the latest drug information, warnings, and patient education guidelines when administering medications. Free reference information is provided by the National Library of Medicine (NLM) on DailyMed and the MedlinePlus websites. DailyMed is a database containing current information from the Food and Drug Administration on prescription and over-the-counter medications. It provides essential information to health professionals for the safe and effective use of medications, including indications, dosage and administration, contraindications, boxed warnings and precautions, adverse reactions, drug interactions, information about use in specific populations, and other important information for health care practitioners. MedlinePlus is an online health information resource for clients and their loved ones with easy-to-understand medication information.

Specific information can be found on the National Alliance on Mental Illness’ Mental Health Medications webpage.


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