WHO DO I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?
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WHAT IS THE GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA (GSA)?
The GSA is the oldest and largest interdisciplinary organization devoted to research, education, and practice in the field of aging. GSA’s principal mission — and that of its 5,400 members — is to advance the study of aging and disseminate information among scientists, decision makers, and the general public.

The Society, founded in 1945, is the driving force behind the advancement of gerontology both domestically and internationally. GSA Members come from over 45 countries.

WHAT IS PFIZER’S INVOLVEMENT?
Pfizer is the sponsor of, and a collaborator with, the Gerontological Society of America’s OTC Sleep Aids and Sleep Health in Older Adults working group.

WHAT IS AN ANTICHOLINERGIC?
Medications with anticholinergic effects are associated with side effects such as blurred vision, constipation, dry mouth, urinary retention, and risk of increased intraocular pressure in patients with narrow-angle glaucoma. Effects of anticholinergics on older adults are especially pronounced and use of these agents in this population should be carefully supervised. All OTC sleep medications have anticholinergic effects.

WHAT HAS THE OTC SLEEP AIDS AND SLEEP HEALTH IN OLDER ADULTS WORKING GROUP ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR IN 2014?
In June 2014, GSA convened another Summit of national stakeholders to further the goals of the previous Summit by gathering prestigious, credible experts to advance and update those results and findings. For example, data from The National Health and Wellness Survey (NHWS) focusing on sleep characteristics of older adults that have not yet been published was presented. A white paper based on the 2014 Summit’s proceedings will be released in November and copies will be available at GSA’s Annual Scientific Meeting in Washington, DC. The Workgroup of subject matter experts will present the Summit findings in a symposium at the Annual Meeting and also lead a Congressional Briefing co-sponsored by Chairman of the Senate Aging Committee, Senator Bill Nelson, to raise awareness and advocacy on older Americans’ sleep health and OTC medication use.

WHAT ARE NEXT STEPS AFTER GSA’S ANNUAL MEETING IN NOVEMBER 2014?
GSA and Pfizer are committed to continuing research activities around sleep and older adults. To address the need for education to support appropriate OTC use by older adults, the Workgroup is developing online training programs specifically for pharmacy professionals, called Silver Market Training Modules. The following two titles will be available around the end of the year.

- Sleep Health and Sleep Disturbance in Older Adults
- Older Adults and OTC Sleep Aids

Materials developed in collaboration with Pfizer.
SLEEP DISTURBANCES IN OLDER ADULTS

The prevalence of disturbed sleep has been shown to increase as individuals age, reasons for which include declining health, institutionalization, stress, and normal changes in circadian rhythms associated with aging. According to the National Sleep Foundation, 44% of older individuals (age 55-84) experience disturbed sleep at least a few nights each week.¹

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF POOR SLEEP IN OLDER ADULTS

In addition to the chronic conditions associated with sleep disruption, recent data show that older adults with insomnia may see effects to:

- Cognitive function²,³
- Mobility⁴
- Risk of falls²,⁵
- Risk of institutionalization²,³
- Quality of life²
- Increased mortality²
- Healthcare use⁶
- Driving ability⁷

The ability to drive is critical for older adult independence. Research has found that disturbed sleep and drowsiness can result in lower levels of driving capacity in older individuals, a finding that strongly suggests a need for interventions to improve sleep in this population.⁷

Additionally, poor sleep in cognitively intact adults has been found to be a more powerful predictor of placement in a long-term care facility than either pain or depression.³

CAREGIVER SLEEP ISSUES

Caregivers are 49 years of age on average, illustrating that a large proportion of caregivers are in fact adults approaching old age themselves, with their own health issues.² Although caregiving can be a labor of love, it can be incredibly stressful. The stress associated with caregiving may be an important predictor for sleep problems, as depressive symptoms are associated with increased sleep disruption. Some data suggest that 40% to 70% of family caregivers have clinically significant symptoms of depression, with approximately a quarter to half of these caregivers meeting the diagnostic criteria for major depression.⁷

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MANAGING SLEEP IN OLDER ADULTS

USE OF OVER-THE-COUNTER (OTC) SLEEP MEDICATIONS BY OLDER ADULTS

Recent data from the Kantar Health March 2013 National Health and Wellness Survey found that OTC sleep medication use among adults older than 60 years of age is extensive. Among these individuals:

- More than 2 million take OTC sleep medications regularly (>1x/month), with 35% of those 2 million taking OTC sleep medications in excess of 20 days per month.

- Approximately 7 in 10 older adults using OTC sleep medication report taking OTC pain and sleep combination products, and most of the rest report taking single ingredient sleep medication.

- Of the respondents age 60 years and older taking OTC sleep agents, approximately 40% also currently take one or more additional medications with anticholinergic effects.

WHAT ARE NONPHARMACOLOGIC APPROACHES TO MANAGING INSOMNIA?

Nonpharmacologic therapies have been shown to be effective for the treatment of chronic insomnia and can produce long-term benefits. These approaches to the treatment of insomnia include use of good sleep hygiene measures (such as creating a dark quiet environment for sleeping), relaxation strategies (such as progressive muscle relaxation or yoga), and cognitive behavioral therapy.

Evidence suggests that nonpharmacologic treatments for insomnia are as effective in older people as in other age groups. These therapies may be appropriate as well for treatment of occasional sleep disturbance in older adults.

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MEDICATION-TAKING BEHAVIORS OF OLDER ADULTS

IMPROVING MEDICATION-TAKING BEHAVIORS OF OLDER ADULTS

More than half of older adults reported that they used five or more prescription medications, OTCs, or dietary supplements. 1 in 25 older adults are at risk for a major potential drug-drug reaction.¹

CURRENT INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE MEDICATION-TAKING BEHAVIOR

Initiatives must consider a variety of factors to support safe medication use for older adults, including health literacy, behavioral social science, and cognitive psychology. Two examples of these initiatives are:

1. The Food and Drug Administration’s Safe Use Initiative aims to create and facilitate public and private collaborations within the health care community. The goal of the Safe Use Initiative is to reduce preventable harm by identifying specific, preventable medication risks and developing, implementing, and evaluating cross-sector interventions with partners who are committed to safe medication use.²

2. National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE), which has been a leading patient safety coalition since 1982. One of NCPIE’s recent tools is Medication Use Safety Training for Seniors (MUST for Seniors). This online educational campaign and workshop is designed to promote safe and appropriate medication use.

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