



MENTAL HEALTH CLINICAL ADVISORY GROUP

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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STAFFED BY:

HEALTH POLICY & ANALYTICS DIVISION

OFFICE OF DELIVERY SYSTEMS INNOVATION

About this report

Oregon Revised Statutes 414.359(6) requires the Mental Health Clinical Advisory Group (MHCAG) to provide an annual report to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly. The report outlines recommendations the MHCAG made to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) the previous year, and it may include recommendations for legislation. The following report fulfills that requirement. Senate Bill 138, passed in 2019, extends the work of the MHCAG indefinitely.

About the MHCAG

The MHCAG is comprised of 18 mental health professionals, consumers and advocates and has the following statutory obligations:

- Create clinical practice resources and recommendations for the treatment of mental health disorders with mental health drugs.
- Develop evidence-based algorithms for the treatment of mental health disorders with mental health drugs.
- Make recommendations to OHA and advise the Pharmacy and Therapeutic (P&T) Committee.
- Recommend changes to any preferred drug list (PDL) overseen by OHA.
- Developing evidence-based treatment algorithms and clinical practice guidelines for the treatment of mental health disorders including, but not limited to, mental health drugs.
- Supporting the [Oregon Psychiatric Access Line](#) (OPAL), which offers a psychiatric advice line for prescribing providers statewide.

Additionally, the MHCAG must:

- Publish its approved recommendations within 30 days of approval, and
- Submit an annual report to interim committees of the Legislative Assembly

Further reading:

- Link: [Recommendations and resources published by MHCAG](#)
- Link: [MHCAG meeting materials and meeting minutes](#)

2023 MHCAG publications

MHCAG uses evidence to develop recommendations

MHCAG publications are sourced from peer-reviewed, evidence-based behavioral health and pharmacology literature. The primary sources of information are systematic reviews, national and international clinical practice guidelines, and randomized controlled trials. The MHCAG follows systematic [research methodology](#) when developing treatment algorithms and clinical guidance documents. Where there are gaps in evidence, the collective professional judgement from MHCAG membership is used.

MHCAG published more documents in 2023 than in any other previous year

The MHCAG met eleven times during 2023 via a virtual meeting platform. This year, the MHCAG trialed meeting monthly. Meeting times were reduced from two hours to fifty-minutes. The trial was successful given the increased number of publications and consistent quorums throughout the year.

The MHCAG published the following eight clinical practice resources and recommendation documents in 2023:

1. [Medication Treatment for Adults with Generalized Anxiety Disorder](#). This document provides the evidence base for the generalized anxiety disorder treatment algorithms. Additionally, it provides information on treating generalized anxiety disorder in specific populations such as pregnant people and older adults.
2. [Generalized Anxiety Disorder Treatment Algorithm](#). This algorithm provides a one-page, quick reference for busy providers that shows an example of how they can best approach the treatment of a person diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder when the disorder is not considered treatment resistant.
3. [Generalized Anxiety Disorder Treatment-Resistant Algorithm](#). This algorithm is also a one-page quick reference for busy providers that shows an example of the best treatment approach for a person who has generalized anxiety disorder that is considered treatment-resistant.
4. [Starting a First-Generation Antipsychotic Medication for the Treatment of Schizophrenia Algorithm](#). This document is a 2023 update to an original algorithm published in the 2019 schizophrenia clinical treatment guidelines.
5. [Starting a Second-Generation Antipsychotic Medication for the Treatment of Schizophrenia Algorithm](#). This document is a 2023 update to an original algorithm published in the 2019 schizophrenia clinical treatment guidelines.
6. [Estimated Relative Adverse Effect Profiles Between Second-Generation Antipsychotic Medications](#). This document is a 2023 update to a side effects table in the 2019 schizophrenia clinical treatment guidelines.
7. [Factors to Consider When Starting Antidepressant Medication](#). This document presents information on side effects, how long it may take for a patient to experience clinical improvement, patient monitoring and treatment duration.

8. [Factors to Consider When Stopping an Antidepressant Medication](#). This document provides information on treatment duration, medication discontinuation and withdrawal management, symptoms of medication withdrawal and patient monitoring.

The MHCAG reviewed scientific evidence and considered real-world practice dynamics encountered by patients and practitioners prior to voting to approve content for publication.

2023 Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee consultation

The P&T Committee may request consultation and feedback from the MHCAG for mental health treatments at any time. The Oregon State University Drug Use Research and Management (DURM) faculty, which contracts with OHA to manage drug policy for the fee-for-service Oregon Health Plan, collate the feedback from the MHCAG and present the recommendations to the P&T Committee.

In 2023, the MHCAG provided recommendations and feedback to the P&T Committee on the following topics:

- The use of pregabalin in the treatment of generalized anxiety disorder;
- Prior authorization criteria for quetiapine as an adjunct treatment for generalized anxiety disorder;
- Prospective safety edits to ensure appropriate use of antipsychotic medications in children
- The use of long-acting injectable antipsychotic medications;
- VMAT-2 inhibitor medications in the treatment of antipsychotic-induced tardive dyskinesia; and
- The newly FDA-approved antidepressant drug zuranolone

In 2024, OHA staff will present publications created during the year by the MHCAG to the P&T Committee.

P&T Committee information, including meeting minutes, can be found [here](#).

MHCAG and the Health Evidence Review Commission

In 2023 the staff of the MHCAG and the Health Evidence Review Commission (HERC) began meeting quarterly starting in July. The goal of these meetings is to identify any points where there may be opportunities for collaboration and information sharing between the two bodies of work. There were two meetings in 2023. Quarterly meetings will continue in 2024.

MHCAG Legislative Recommendations

During the final meeting of the year, the MHCAG reached consensus on the following two recommendations they would like the legislature to consider in future sessions:

- Fund the building of more high-acuity psychiatric and co-occurring medical-psychiatric beds for both children and adults, and fund the commensurate necessary healthcare workforce to care for these patients; and
- Establish a consistent psychotropic medication formulary in the county jail system to ensure greater continuity of care between acute care settings and jails.

Future MHCAG work

MHCAG has committed to creating multiple clinical guidance documents each year. In 2024, the MHCAG expects to continue the review and update the 2019 schizophrenia clinical treatment guidelines and begin work on sleep disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Special thanks

OHA wishes to thank the all-volunteer MHCAG membership for their continued commitment to this work and the improvement of Oregon's behavioral health treatment system.