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# Schizophrenia Case Series, Part 4: Differential Diagnosis and Management of Akathisia

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**FACULTY INFORMATION**

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Lake Jackson, TX

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

Physicians, physician assistants,  
pharmacists, and other healthcare  
professionals with an interest in mental  
health.

**CREDIT INFORMATION**

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Outfitters, LLC, is accredited  
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Universal Program Number:  
376-000-09-012-H01-P

Activity Type: knowledge-based

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Release Date: April 3, 2009  
Credit Expiration Date: April 3, 2010  
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**STATEMENT OF NEED**

Akathisia is a distressing and potentially disabling side effect of some antipsychotic medications that needs to be managed and followed. It is associated with poor medication adherence,<sup>1</sup> more severe psychotic symptoms,<sup>2</sup> and poorer outcome.<sup>3</sup> The primary symptoms of akathisia include both subjective awareness and distress related to the motor restlessness and compulsion to move the legs, as well as objective, observable signs such as pacing, shifting weight back and forth while standing, and/or difficulty sitting still.<sup>4</sup> Differential diagnosis of akathisia can be challenging, and depends on careful physical examination and the use of standardized scales. There is little difference among second-generation antipsychotics with respect to potential for producing akathisia<sup>5</sup> and misdiagnosis and improper treatment can exacerbate symptoms. A number of approaches are available for managing akathisia in patients with schizophrenia, including antipsychotic dose reduction, switching medication, and/or adding adjunctive therapy targeted specifically toward akathisia. In this interactive, case-based activity, expert faculty provide evidence as well as clinical insight for identifying and managing akathisia while allowing participants to hone their decision-making skills with real-world clinical issues.

<sup>1</sup> Young JL, Zonana HV, Shepler L. Medication noncompliance in schizophrenia: codification and update. *Bull Am Acad psychiatry Law* 1986;14:105-122.  
<sup>2</sup> Newcomer JW, Miller LS, Faustman WO, Wetzel MW, Vogler GP, Csernansky JG. Correlations between akathisia and residual psychopathology: a by-product of neuroleptic-induced dysphoria. *Br J Psychiatry* 1994;164:834-838.  
<sup>3</sup> Kinon BJ, Kane JM, Johns C, et al. Treatment of neuroleptic-resistant schizophrenic relapse. *Psychopharmacol Bull* 1993;29:309-314.  
<sup>4</sup> American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth edition*. 1994; American Psychiatric Association; Washington D.C.  
<sup>5</sup> Lieberman JA, Stroup TS, McEvoy JP, et al. Effectiveness of antipsychotic drugs in patients with chronic schizophrenia. *N Engl J Med* 2005;353:1209-1223.

**ACTIVITY GOAL**

To provide mental healthcare practitioners with strategies drawn from the evidence base for assessment and management of akathisia in antipsychotic-treated patients with schizophrenia.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- At the end of this CE activity, participants should be able to:
- Identify criteria for differential diagnosis of akathisia in patients with schizophrenia treated with antipsychotic medication.
  - Review strategies for assessing akathisia in patients with schizophrenia.
  - Evaluate approaches for managing akathisia in patients with schizophrenia.

FAX completed form to **240.243.1033**

**YES! Register me for this online neuroscienceCME activity.**

Site Name: \_\_\_\_\_ # Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Practice Setting:  Community Mental Health  State Mental Health  Primary Care  
 Private Practice  Other: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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