

Eli's Rehab Report

NEWS BRIEFS: Add Sedative Hypnotics to Your List of Fall Risks

When you're evaluating your geriatric patients for fall risks, raise a red flag if they mention being on a sedative hypnotic drug. A new study published in the January 2010 edition of *The American Journal of Managed Care* revealed that patients receiving sedative hypnotics classified as Beers high-severity (BHS) were 22 percent more likely to suffer a fall or fracture than control subjects, according to a press release.

Sedative-hypnotics slow down the body's functions, and physicians often prescribe them to treat anxiety or promote sleep. A couple well-known sedative-hypnotic drugs include diazepam (Valium) and secobarbital (Seconal).

In addition, patients exposed to these medications had significantly higher adjusted medical and total health care costs than those in the control group.

This study was the first to examine clinical outcomes associated with specific so-called potentially inappropriate medications (PIMs) and is based on electronic pharmacy and medical claims data, the release said.

"These findings demonstrate that elderly patients who take certain PIMs are at increased risk of adverse events and higher health care costs," said **Karen Stockl, PharmD**, of Prescription Solutions and lead author of the study.