



State Long-Term Care
Ombudsman Program



Do You Have the Right Diagnosis?

Were you diagnosed with
schizophrenia after moving
into your nursing home?

Were you told you need
drugs to treat symptoms
of schizophrenia?



Dementia is not a chronic mental illness like schizophrenia.

If you think you or someone you know was given the wrong diagnosis in a nursing home, your ombudsman can help you understand your rights and talk to your nursing home staff.

Questions to ask staff:

- Why was I given this diagnosis?
- What are my symptoms?
- Who made this decision?
- Am I on an antipsychotic drug?
- Are there other treatments that don't involve drugs?
- What are the risks with the drugs you want me to take?
- Who will monitor my symptoms?

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health, Center for Medicare Advocacy, National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Schizophrenia or Dementia?

If you have dementia and were told you have schizophrenia, you may have been given the wrong diagnosis.

It is extremely rare for someone with schizophrenia to be diagnosed for the first time at an older age.

People with schizophrenia almost always find out they have it before moving into a nursing home.

Symptoms of dementia may look like symptoms of schizophrenia, but they are very different illnesses. A psychiatrist is the best professional to diagnose schizophrenia. You have the right to ask for an evaluation by a psychiatrist.

Make sure you have the right diagnosis because dementia and schizophrenia must be treated in different ways.

Antipsychotic Medication

Schizophrenia is usually treated with antipsychotic drugs. But doctors can recommend other approaches as an effective treatment for dementia. If you have the wrong diagnosis, you might be given drugs you don't need.

Antipsychotic drugs are harmful if you do not need them. For someone with dementia, antipsychotic drugs can make everyday activities more difficult.

They also have dangerous side effects such as more anxiety, restlessness, loss of hunger or thirst, excessive sleeping and even death.

Ask about the risks of the drugs you take and ask why they were prescribed for you.

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texashhs.org/ltcombudsman

Long-term care ombudsmen advocate for residents and are separate from HHS.