CHOOSING WISELY
AND THE AMERICAN GERIATRICS SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION
The American Geriatrics Society (AGS) is committed to improving health, independence, and quality of life for all as we age by implementing and advancing programs in clinical care, geriatrics research, professional and public education, and public policy. Our partnership with the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) Foundation for its Choosing Wisely® campaign represents an important extension of that mission. Since 2012, AGS’s Choosing Wisely lists have raised professional and public awareness about treatments and tests to question and discuss because they may lack efficacy or cause potential harm.

METHODS
In developing the Choosing Wisely platform, ABIM encouraged specialty societies like the AGS to:
1. Develop recommendations based on our unique expertise.
2. Address tests and procedures frequently used in care.
3. Promote suggestions for tests and treatments warranting further discussion based on sound, sufficient, and scientific evidence.

For AGS’s Choosing Wisely list (released in 2013 and inclusive of five recommendations), we:

1. Convened a workgroup led by our Clinical Practice and Models of Care (CPMC) Committee Chair and including representatives from our CPMC, Ethics, Ethnogeriatrics, and Quality and Performance Measurement Committees.
2. Surveyed AGS members, representatives from the Association of Directors of Geriatric Academic Programs (ADAGP), and other select stakeholders on tests and procedures to consider for our list.
3. Survey results were compiled and organized by AGS staff, with our Choosing Wisely Workgroup reviewing summary data and narrowing our field of tests and procedures to a short-list of 10. Literature searches and consultation with member experts further culled the list to a total of five tests and treatments to consider with input from our more than 5,000 members (see Recommendations 1-5 in Figure 1).

In 2014, the AGS developed an additional set of Choosing Wisely suggestions using a similar process. Both AGS lists have since been consolidated and reviewed (most recently in 2015, with an additional update initiated in early 2017).

1. Don’t recommend percutaneous feeding tubes in patients with advanced dementia; instead offer oral assisted feeding.
2. Don’t use antipsychotics as the first choice to treat behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia.
3. Avoid using medications other than metformin to achieve hemoglobin A1c targets in most older adults; moderate control is generally better.
4. Don’t use benzodiazepines or other sedative-hypnotics in older adults as first choice for insomnia, agitation, or delirium.
5. Don’t use antimicrobials to treat bacteriuria in older adults unless specific urinary tract symptoms are present.
6. Don’t prescribe cholinesterase inhibitors for dementia without periodic assessment for perceived cognitive benefits and adverse gastrointestinal effects.
7. Don’t recommend screening for breast, colorectal, prostate, or lung cancer considering the expectation and the risks of testing, overdiagnosis, and overtreatment.
8. Avoid using prescription appetite stimulants or high-calorie supplements for treatment of anorexia or cachexia in older adults; instead, optimize social supports, discontinue medications that may interfere with eating, provide appealing food and feeding assistance, and clarify patient goals with healthcare providers.
9. Don’t prescribe a medication without conducting a drug regimen review.
10. Don’t use physical restraints to manage behavioral symptoms of dementia, diabetes, insomnia, unintended weight loss, and other health concerns that may warrant deeper discussion based on new insights and information on appropriate healthcare choices. Our work promoting high-quality, person-centered care has helped synthesize these pressing updates in a format that is easy to understand—and apply—in everyday practice. Our work raising public and professional awareness of these insights has helped to ensure they can move from theory to practice as we work to support the health, safety, and independence of all older adults.

DISSEMINATION
The first AGS Choosing Wisely list was released at a national press event in Washington, D.C., on February 21, 2013. In support of Choosing Wisely’s launch, the AGS:

1. Engaged in media relations efforts reaching more than 100 print, broadcast, and online outlets, including AGS-specific coverage by the Boston Globe, Denver Post, Kansas City Star, and San Diego Union Tribune, as well as broader ABIM Foundation coverage by the New York Times, NPR, Reuters, Washington Post, and USA Today.
2. Worked with sister organizations across healthcare and medical education to ensure broader awareness for and dissemination of Choosing Wisely insights through impactful organizations like the American College of Physicians, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and Wiley/Blackwell Publishing.
3. Connected geriatrics healthcare professionals—including our more than 5,000 members—to a compendium of resources available for free through GeriatricsCareOnline.org, the online home for Geriatrics resources and publications.

Since developing our second Choosing Wisely list and ensuring timely updates for our consolidated recommendations, the AGS has continued to work with peer groups, healthcare professionals, healthcare advocates, and members of the media and general public to ensure a broader understanding of tests and treatments that may cause more harm than good for older men and women.

Choosing Wisely list updates have included extensive education campaigns leveraging the reach of trade and popular media. These opportunities for connecting journalists to content experts on emerging insights have led to several in-depth explorations of research on efficient health care outcomes as diverse as Consumer Reports and MedPage Today.

To ensure professional awareness of Choosing Wisely insights, the AGS continues to make our lists available for free to members and other geriatrics healthcare professionals via GeriatricsCareOnline.org. Choosing Wisely insights also inform other important tools for the geriatrics community, with references embedded throughout board-certification materials for geriatricians and advanced practice nurses and in Geriatrics At Your Fingertips, our annually updated reference text for the latest information on clinical care.

Through an ABIM Foundation partnership with Consumer Reports, the AGS has translated healthcare professional recommendations into public awareness tip sheets on particularly important topics for older adults (see Figure 2). These accessible summaries for older adults and caregivers have been made available to millions of men and women through the support of ABIM, Consumer Reports, and the AGS Health in Aging Foundation (our non-profit committed to connecting older adults and caregivers to geriatrics expertise).

Choosing Wisely continues to inform AGS communications campaigns for our more than 5,000 members, with regular features at AGS Annual Scientific Meetings and in AGS print newsletters, member email alerts, and social media posts targeting geriatrics healthcare professionals, older adults, and caregivers.

For information about the AGS Choosing Wisely campaign, contact Mary Jordan Samuel at mjsamuell@americangeriatrics.org

Fast Facts About the Impact of Choosing Wisely

1. More than 100 media outlets have offered coverage of AGS Choosing Wisely efforts since 2013.
2. The AGS Choosing Wisely lists have been accessed by more than 3,500 AGS members and geriatrics healthcare professionals through GeriatricsCareOnline.org alone.
3. AGS Choosing Wisely topics addressed by Consumer Reports and the AGS Health in Aging Foundation have been accessed by millions of older adults and caregivers annually (via HealthinAging.org).

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Figure 1: AGS Choosing Wisely Recommendations (as of 2015)

Figure 2: Choosing Wisely Tip Sheet

Antibiotics for urinary tract infections in older people

When are they needed? and when don’t they help.

For more information about Choosing Wisely, visit choosingwisely.org

The Choosing Wisely Champs program has helped expand the Choosing Wisely effort by highlighting stories of individual clinicians whose leadership in choosing tests and treatments wisely has inspired others to promote high-quality, person-centered care.

Held-Ann Courtney, PA-C, and Ariel Green, MD, MPH, were the AGS inaugural Choosing Wisely Champions, recognized at the AGS Annual Scientific Meeting in 2016.

● Physician assistant at Baptist Medical Center in Springfield, Mo., Courtney has participated in regular research efforts that have resulted in more than three choosing recommendations for institution adjustments. She’s also involved in the Baptist Hypertension Clinic, a national hypertension center of excellence, helping to develop and refine guidelines for patients with hypertension. “Choosing Wisely was a catalyst for the clinic and for the hospital that supported it,” says Courtney. “It gave us a platform to advocate for change. It’s been a very positive catalyst for the clinic and the organization.”

● Physician at the New England Baptist Hospital in Boston, Green saw the Choosing Wisely effort as an opportunity to help change the way clinicians spend their time. “It’s a way to use the information we’re getting from our work to improve practice,” she says. “It’s a very positive way for our system to have a positive impact on the local community.”

At the 2017 AGS Annual Scientific Meeting, the AGS congratulated Eric Anthony Lee, MD, on being named our newest champion thanks to his important work at Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center.

● As a chair of the High Blood Drugs Initiative in the Obesity Committee for Kaiser Permanente, Southern California, Dr. Lee created a clinical trial to test whether taking drugs for high blood pressure would help reduce weight in adults. Dr. Lee helped update the initiative’s recommendations following new evidence from a large randomized clinical trial. “This clinic-based initiative reduced mortality and morbidity and improved quality measures,” Dr. Lee says. He hopes to apply the initiative’s lessons to Kaiser Permanente representing the depth and breadth of Choosing Wisely guidance from the AGS.