

THE USE OF ANTIPSYCHOTIC DRUGS IN ELDERLY PATIENTS WITH DEMENTIA

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Introduction: Delusions, hallucinations, aggression, and agitation affect more than half of patients with dementia. Antipsychotic drugs are used to treat these behaviors and symptoms. They are among the most frequently used psychotropic drugs in this disease, but their benefits are uncertain and concerns about safety have emerged. We assessed the current practice in use of antipsychotics medication in outpatients with dementia.

Method: We conducted a retrospective cohort study involving patients older than 65 years who began outpatient treatment with antipsychotic drugs following a dementia diagnosis.

Results: 22 patients were included (16 female, 6 male) with mean age of 78.6 years. All patients consulted for behavioral problems. Most received typical antipsychotic drugs (72,8%), while 36,4% received atypical antipsychotic drugs. 13 patients (59,1%) were receiving haloperidol. Improvement was observed in 54,5% of patients.

The comparisons of haloperidol with risperidone suggest no difference in efficacy for the treatment of global behaviour disturbance. On the other hand, use of haloperidol is, however, associated with a higher incidence of extrapyramidal and other side effects.

Conclusion: The treatment of elderly patients requires daily careful management and monitoring because of their poly pathology, polymedication and of their greater sensitivity to the toxic effects of drugs. Overall, the study findings suggest that there is a need to monitor antipsychotic drug use by elderly patients in light of recent efficacy and safety data on atypical agents.