



## OLTCA<sup>®</sup> Research News and Views

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September 2009

### **Antipsychotic Therapy and Short -Term Serious Events in Older Adults with Dementia**

The study, “Antipsychotic Therapy and Short -Term Serious Events in Older Adults with Dementia” examined the short-term serious effects of antipsychotic drugs on older adults diagnosed with dementia in both the community and long term care homes. Funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) and released in the May 2009 issue of Archives of Internal Medicine, the study indicates that elderly people who take antipsychotic drugs are at an increased risk of having an event that is serious enough to lead to hospitalization or death within a month of starting therapy.

Antipsychotics are a group of drugs commonly but not exclusively used to treat psychosis. Conditions for which antipsychotic drugs might be used include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, mania, and delusional disorder. Over time different classes of antipsychotics have been developed. Most of the drugs in the second generation of antipsychotics, known as atypical antipsychotics, have more recently been developed and come into use in Alzheimer patients.

The research examined Ontario residents aged 66 years and older diagnosed with dementia. 20,682 older adults with dementia lived in the community and another 20,559 matched individuals lived in nursing homes between April 1, 1997 and March 31, 2004. Antipsychotic therapy is widely used to manage the behavioral problems as a resulting from the disease.

The study found that community dwelling older adults who were dispensed conventional antipsychotic therapy were 3.8 times more likely to develop any serious event during the 30 days of follow up compared to those who were not. And, although the pattern of serious events was similar the differences were less pronounced in the long term care home population. Serious events that were indicated by a hospital admission or death were frequently associated with short term use of antipsychotic therapy in older adults with dementia.

Recommendations from the study may help guide antipsychotic therapy use. Suggestions include caution in administering and monitoring the drugs even when short term therapy is being prescribed. Other recommendations include closely monitored surveillance of new drugs that may pass through clinical trials but have not been closely monitored in a real world setting by frail individuals.

For more information about the study contact Dr. Chaim Bell at [bellc@smh.toronto.on.ca](mailto:bellc@smh.toronto.on.ca) The full article can be found at <http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/168/10/1090> or can be accessed through the **Seniors Health Research Transfer Network (SHRTN) Library Services** at <https://www.ehealthontario.ca/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=1485&mode=2>

Rochon, Paula A, Sharon-Lise Normand, Tara Gomes, Sudeep S Gill, Geoffrey M Anderson, Magda Melo, Kathy Sykora, Lorraine Lipscombe, Chaim M Bell, and Jerry H Gurwitz. 2008. "Antipsychotic therapy and short-term serious events in older adults with dementia." *Archives Of Internal Medicine* 168, no. 10: 1090-1096. MEDLINE, EBSCOhost (accessed September 16, 2009).