

Use of psychotropics and analgesics before and after initiating treatment with acetylcholinesterase inhibitors

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Background/Aims: The aim was to study the prevalence of use of different drugs prescribed for behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia in users of acetylcholinesterase inhibitors (AChEIs) before and after AChEI-initiation, and compare with the use in the general population.

Methods: Use of antidepressants, antipsychotics, and analgesics in the 4 years before and 2 years after AChEI initiation was studied based on data from the Norwegian Prescription Database 2004-2016.

Results: The prevalence of use of antidepressants and antipsychotics the year before AChEI initiation was twice the prevalence in the age-adjusted general population and continued to rise in the first two years after initiation of AChEI. The prevalence of use of weak analgesics and antipsychotics increased strongly in the last year before AChEI initiation. The increase in the use of antidepressants started at least 4 years before. Opioid use was generally lower than in the general population and was not influenced by AChEI initiation.

Conclusion: Increased use of antidepressants and antipsychotics before and after initiation of AChEIs may indicate that behavioral symptoms occur in an early phase of Alzheimer's disease. The prescription pattern of analgesics with a low use of opioids may indicate an undertreatment of pain in people with dementia.

Referanser:

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