

Antipsychotics given to patients without mental illness despite questions of effectiveness and risks

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Antipsychotic drugs are widely used to blunt aggressive behaviour in people with intellectual disabilities who have no history of mental illness, a UK survey of medical records finds, even though the medicines may not have a calming effect. The finding is worrisome because antipsychotic drugs can cause severe side effects such as obesity or diabetes.

Psychiatry researcher Rory Sheehan and colleagues¹ at University College London studied data from 33,016 people with intellectual disabilities from general-care practices in the United Kingdom over a period of up to 15 years. The researchers found that 71 percent of 9,135 people who were treated with antipsychotics had never been diagnosed with a severe mental illness, and that the drugs were more likely to be prescribed to those who displayed problematic behaviours.

Evidence suggests that the drugs are not effective at treating aggressive and disruptive behaviour, says psychiatrist Peter Tyrer of Imperial College London. In 2008, he and several colleagues gave haloperidol (Haldol), risperidone (Risperdal) or a placebo to people who had intellectual disabilities but no mental illness, and exhibited aggressive behaviour. The [drugs were no better at reducing behavioural problems than the placebo](#).

Read full, original post: [Intellectually disabled often get antipsychotics in absence of mental illness](#)