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Dementia and antipsychotics are a deadly mixture

Antipsychotic treatment among people with dementia increase mortality within six months by 35 percent. That is the conclusion in a new study from the Danish Dementia Research Centre.



Many people with dementia are treated with antipsychotic drugs despite well known, serious side effects. New research from the Danish Dementia Research Centre shows that in addition to the already known side effects such as metabolic disturbances and heart disorders, one must also include a 35 percent increased risk of death compared to people with dementia that is not treated with antipsychotic drugs.

"The research shows that treatment with antipsychotic drugs increases mortality among people with dementia significantly, even when we take other factors such as age and sex as well as the duration of the dementia disease and the presence of other diseases into account," says MD, PhD Ane Nørgaard Christensen.

According to the researchers it is therefore important to be extra careful in using antipsychotics to treat people with dementia, regardless of with a prior diagnosis of cardiovascular disease or diabetes.

Use with precaution

Chair of the Danish Dementia Research Centre, Professor MD Gunhild Waldemar, agrees that the new knowledge supports the precaution with which antipsychotic drugs to people with dementia should be treated.

"We have for some time known that one should be careful about treating people with dementia with antipsychotic medication when challenging behavior occurs. This has until now been due to the many side effects that can be.



The new research emphasizes that we must continue to fight for people with dementia to only be treated with antipsychotics if it is absolutely necessary and for as short a period as possible,” she says.

In Denmark around 20 percent of people with dementia are treated with antipsychotics, despite the fact that one of the goals in the national dementia strategy 2025 is to halve consumption.

The study is a cohort study based in nationwide registry data. The study included 8,244 people with dementia who were treated with antipsychotics as well as 24,730 people with dementia who were not receiving antipsychotic treatment. The cohort were in the age group 65-95 and data were drawn from the period 2009-2014.

This study is the first of its kind based on nationwide data.

You can read the article at Journal of the American Geriatrics Society her

<https://agsjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jgs.17623>

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Oprettet: 07. februar 2022