HEALTHY TIPS

Study Shows: Some Prescribed Meds May Increase the Risk of Dementia

By bestfolkmedicine · 06/10/2019 · 2 min read



Anticholinergic meds are prescribed for different health problems. This is an umbrella term for several types of meds, from Benadryl to some antipsychotics and meds for Parkinson's. However, according to a recent study, these meds may elevate the dementia risk in elderly patients.

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They're prescribed for the treatment of depression, COPD, allergies, gastrointestinal problems, and overactive bladder.

Their usage is to aid the contraction and relaxation of the muscles and they work by blocking a chemical which transports messages in the nervous system.

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Anticholinergic Drugs Put You at a Higher Risk of Dementia

According to the study done by British researchers, people aged 55 and older who were taking such meds on a daily basis for a period of three years were found to have a 50 percent higher risk of dementia.

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According to the author of the study, Carol Coupland who works at primary care in the University of Nottingham, their study adds to the evidence of possible risks linked with these meds.

These meds also have short-term side effects such as confusion and memory loss; however, it's not clear if their prolonged use elevates the chance for dementia. So, the researchers decided to find out.

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To achieve this, they tested medical records of almost 60,000 patients in the UK diagnosed with dementia and a control group with patients without dementia. Each of the patients had 55 years or more.

At the end of the study, after accounting for other risk factors for dementia, the team concluded that these meds contributed to a higher risk of dementia.

The patients who took other types of these drugs like gastrointestinal drugs and antihistamines didn't show a higher risk.

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If you want to learn more about this study, you can look for it in the JAMA Internal Medicine journal.

Should We Stop Taking these Meds?!

The researchers emphasize that this was only an observational study-thus; it can't prove if these meds really trigger dementia.

The study is however a sign that doctors need to be more cautious in the future when prescribing meds with anticholinergic characteristics, says the co-author of the study, Tom Dening.

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He also added that it’s vital that patients take these meds and never cease them suddenly, because this may cause more harm than good. For any concerns, it’s best to consult your doctors and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of your current therapy.

Sources:

NY TIMES

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