Metabolic side effects of atypical antipsychotics in children: a literature review

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The objective of this review is to summarize the data about metabolic side effects of atypical antipsychotics in children.

Original research articles about side effects of atypical antipsychotics used in children were reviewed. The data was obtained mainly through Medline searches, identifying articles focusing on the use of atypical antipsychotics in children. Forty studies that addressed the issue of metabolic side effects were selected.

The use of atypical antipsychotics in children has been consistently associated with weight gain and moderate prolactin elevation, while only a few case reports address the issue of glucose dysregulation and dyslipidaemia. The risk of weight gain and hyperprolactinaemia might be higher in younger children. Other risk factors have also been associated with antipsychotic-induced metabolic disturbances. These changes seem to be reversible, at least in some cases.

Metabolic side effects of atypical antipsychotics could lead to serious complications in children. Considerations should be given before initiating treatment and consistent clinical monitoring is essential.

Key Words: atypical antipsychotics • weight • glycaemia • diabetes • lipids • prolactin • side effect
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