

Drug class not effective for Alzheimer's

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A study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, Md., says antipsychotic drugs used to treat Alzheimer's patients are mostly ineffective.

The study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, concluded that the drugs benefit very few patients with the degenerative illness, and the helpful effects are canceled out by frequent side effects, The Washington Post reported Thursday.

The researchers studied 421 Alzheimer's patients who suffered from disabling agitation, delusions or hallucinations. The patients were randomly assigned a placebo or one of three antipsychotic drugs -- Zyprexa from Eli Lilly; Seroquel from AstraZeneca; and Risperdal from Janssen Pharmaceutical, The New York Times reported.

Lead study author Lon Schneider, a professor of psychiatry, neurology and gerontology at the University of Southern California School of Medicine, said "there were no significant differences between the groups with regard to improvement" after 12 weeks of treatment, the Times said.

Spokesmen for the three pharmaceutical manufacturers said the drugs were not approved by the Food and Drug Administration for Alzheimer's use and the companies did not recommend them for that function.

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