

Schizophrenia studies should open dialog

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Recent studies on schizophrenia treatment and cost should spark discovery of a third generation of treatment, a U.S. mental health advocacy group said.

A series of studies on the treatment of schizophrenia confirmed what many thought -- first generation drugs cost less than second-generation advancements and, as a class, second-generation drugs were no more effective than first, said Ken Duckworth, medical director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

The studies also warned against treatment based on cost, not the individual patient's needs, Duckworth said.

"Broad findings remain subject to the fact that 'one size does not fit all' in choosing the right medication for a patient," Duckworth said, which the National Institute of Mental Health, which funded the studies, also emphasized.

Because second-generation drugs changed the side effects but not the drugs' effectiveness, Duckworth said, "The time has come for a third generation of medications for schizophrenia.

Duckworth said the most important contribution of the studies "lies in stimulating new ways of thinking about medication treatment for schizophrenia, and providing a base for the next generation."

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