

Weight gain induced by antipsychotic drugs can be avoided

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A research team from Université Laval's Faculty of Medicine and Robert-Giffard Hospital has demonstrated that weight gain induced by the use of antipsychotic drugs—which in extreme cases can be as high as 30 kilos in only one month—can be avoided through a specially designed weight control program. The researchers supervised by psychiatrist Marie-Josée Poulin and kinesiologist Angelo Tremblay report the details of their findings in a recent edition of the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*.

The researchers tested their weight control program's effectiveness on a group of 59 patients treated for mental health problems. These people, suffering from schizophrenia and psycho-affective or bipolar disorders, had been using antipsychotic drugs for almost three years on average.

Patients were invited to attend a 90-minute educational session about healthy eating and physical activity. They then took part in two one-hour workout sessions every week for an 18-month period. These workouts included both aerobic and muscle-building exercises and were supervised by kinesiologists.

To evaluate the program's effectiveness, the research team regularly measured the participants' key biochemical and physical parameters and compared them to those of a control group made up of 51 sedentary or moderately active patients also taking antipsychotic medication.

In the control group, subjects' weight, waist size and body mass index

increased on average more than 4% from the beginning to the end of the study. Their levels of bad cholesterol and triglycerides also went up 15% and 12% respectively.

In contrast, the subjects who took part in the weight control program saw their average weight, waist size and body mass index decrease by 4% or more while their levels of good cholesterol went up 21%, their bad cholesterol went down 14%, and their triglycerides levels decreased by 26%.

“This is encouraging news for people suffering from mental illness because weight gain induced by antipsychotic drugs has several negative effects: it disrupts the lipid profile, increases cardiovascular and diabetes risk, and interferes with effective treatment follow-up,” points out Jean-Philippe Chaput, co-author of the study. “Our results highlight the importance of a weight control program designed specifically for people who take antipsychotic drugs. In an ideal world, every prescription for antipsychotic medication should be accompanied by a prescription for physical training,” concludes the researcher.

Source: Université Laval

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