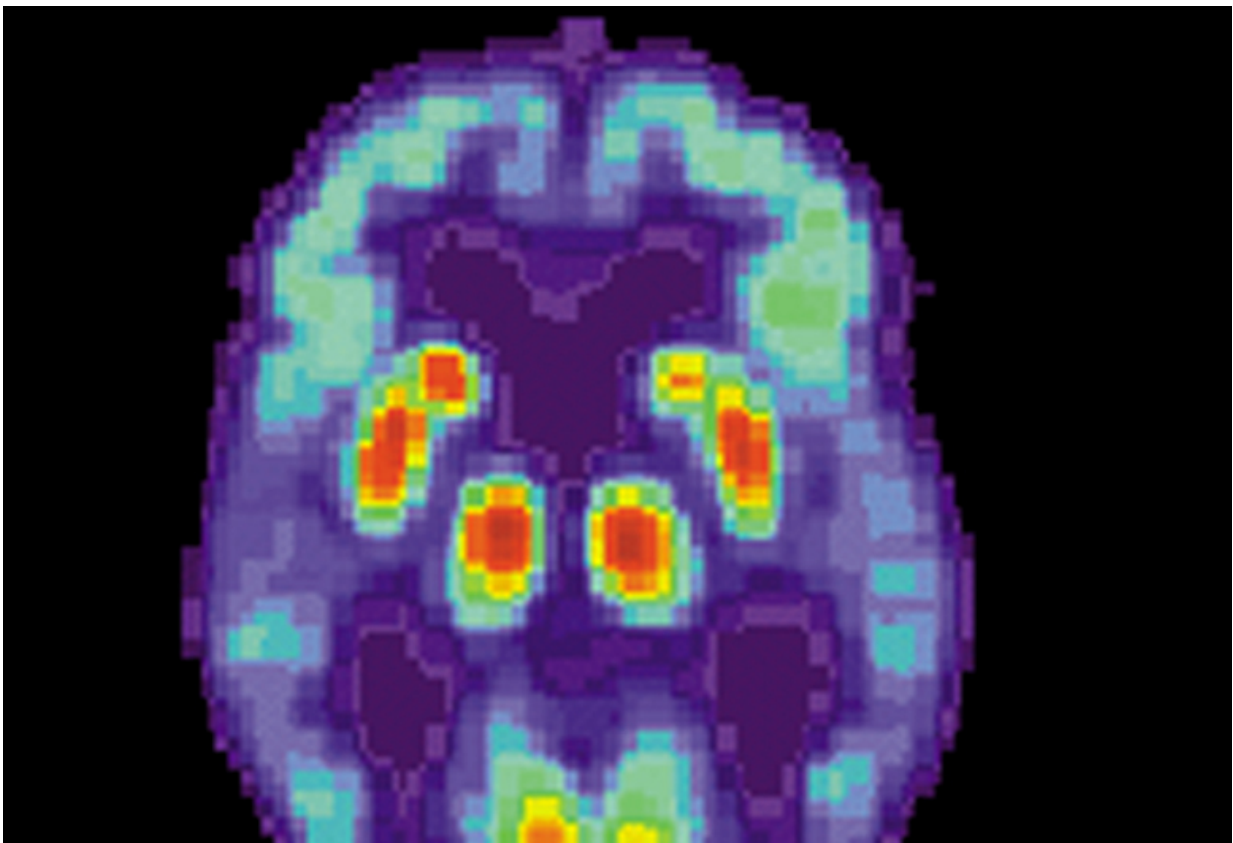


Antipsychotic medications linked to brain injuries in individuals with Alzheimer's disease

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PET scan of a human brain with Alzheimer's disease. Credit: public domain

Use of antipsychotic medications was associated with an increased risk

of head injuries in a study of individuals with Alzheimer's disease. The findings are published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

The nationwide study of individuals in Finland who were diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease from 2005 to 2011 included 21,795 patients who started taking [antipsychotic medications](#) and 21,795 patients who did not. Use of antipsychotic medications was linked with a 29% higher risk of [head injuries](#)—the "event rate" was 1.65 vs. 1.26 per 100 person-years in users vs. non-users. (This means there would be an average of 1.65 vs. 1.26 injuries among 100 people over one year. This translates to 165 vs. 126 injuries per 10,000 people.) Also, use of antipsychotic medications was linked with a 22% higher risk of traumatic brain injuries—0.90 vs. 0.72 per 100 person-years.

When comparing antipsychotic medications, quetiapine users had 60% higher risk of traumatic brain injuries compared with risperidone users.

"Persons with Alzheimer's disease have a higher risk of falling, head injuries, and traumatic brain injuries and worse prognosis after these events in comparison to those without Alzheimer's [disease](#). Therefore, it is important to avoid further increasing risk with antipsychotics in this vulnerable population, if possible," said lead author Vesa Tapiainen, MD, of the University of Eastern Finland.

More information: Vesa Tapiainen et al, The Risk of Head Injuries Associated With Antipsychotic Use Among Persons With Alzheimer's disease, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.16275](https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.16275)

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