Aripiprazole is effective against the symptoms of schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder


Is aripiprazole effective in people with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder?

METHODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design:</th>
<th>Randomised controlled trial.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allocation:</td>
<td>Unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blinding:</td>
<td>Double blind (participants and assessors).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow up period:</td>
<td>Four weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting:</td>
<td>Forty medical centres in the USA; September 1997 to October 1998.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients:</td>
<td>404 people hospitalised with acute relapse of schizophrenia (n = 289) or schizoaffective disorder (n = 115), scoring ≥60 on the Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS), and responsive to antipsychotics. Participants taking long acting neuroleptics were included if they were deteriorating clinically. Exclusions: other psychiatric disorder requiring pharmacotherapy; recent history of suicidal tendencies/ attempts; violence; substance abuse; neurological abnormality (not tardive dyskinesia or extrapyramidal symptoms); treatment with investigational drug in the month preceding the washout phase; and acute or unstable medical comorbidity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention:</td>
<td>Four weeks of: 20 mg/day aripiprazole (n = 101), 30 mg/day aripiprazole (n = 101), 6 mg/day risperidone (n = 99), or placebo (n = 103). Participants were hospitalised for the entire study period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes:</td>
<td>Changes in PANSS scores from baseline, change in Clinical Global Impression-Severity of Illness (CGI-S) subscale score.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient follow up:</td>
<td>Dropout rates: 50% with placebo vs 40% with 20 mg/d aripiprazole vs 34% with 30 mg/d aripiprazole vs 37% with risperidone. Dropouts were due to worsening symptoms or lack of clinical improvement (10%), adverse effects (11%), or other reasons (19%).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MAIN RESULTS

Aripiprazole significantly improved overall PANSS score and CGI-S score compared with placebo (see web extra table 1).

CONCLUSIONS

Aripiprazole is the first non-dopamine D2 receptor antagonist shown to be effective against the positive and negative symptoms in schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder.

Sources of funding: Bristol-Myers Squibb and Otsuka Pharmaceuticals.

Commentary

Aripiprazole, as a partial agonist at D2 dopamine receptors, presents an intriguing new treatment approach for psychotic illness. Theoretical mechanisms of action of other antipsychotics have involved high D2 dopamine receptor blockade (for conventional agents) and high SHT2A serotonin: D2 dopamine blockade or fast dissociation from D2 dopamine receptors (for earlier atypical agents). This important, large study provides the first substantial evidence that compared with a leading atypical antipsychotic, aripiprazole has similar efficacy and greater tolerability. Trials by Kane et al and Daniel et al (reported in Kelleher et al) of aripiprazole or haloperidol versus placebo provide related evidence. In those studies, aripiprazole had comparable efficacy and was at least as fast in onset as the conventional agent. It was also associated with less severe side effects.

The maximum dose of risperidone used in this trial is not typical of today’s US practice, and titration may have been too rapid for some subjects. These factors may have influenced the results in aripiprazole’s favour. Dosing of aripiprazole may have also been high. Doses over 15 mg/day have not generally been associated with increased efficacy. Finally, these data remind us that risperidone can cause QTc prolongation.

Evidence from a variety of studies suggests that aripiprazole can be recommended as a safe and effective treatment for schizophrenia. In addition to these findings, in preliminary studies aripiprazole has been beneficial for up to one year, and even at doses greater than 30 mg/day. Further comparisons with atypical antipsychotics, additional longer term trials, and reports on the use in combination with other psychotropics will ultimately define its best role. Aripiprazole is also a promising agent for the treatment of acute mania and possibly other illnesses. Its success could lead to the development of a new generation of antipsychotics.

The Zucker Hillside Hospital, Glen Oaks, NY, USA

Aripiprazole is effective against the symptoms of schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder

*Evid Based Mental Health* 2004 7: 13
doi: 10.1136/ebmh.7.1.13

Updated information and services can be found at:
[http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/7/1/13](http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/7/1/13)

**These include:**

**Supplementary Material**
Supplementary material can be found at:
[http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/suppl/2005/02/10/7.1.13.DC1](http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/suppl/2005/02/10/7.1.13.DC1)

**References**
This article cites 8 articles, 0 of which you can access for free at:
[http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/7/1/13#BIBL](http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/7/1/13#BIBL)

**Email alerting service**
Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

**Topic Collections**
Articles on similar topics can be found in the following collections

- Schizophrenia spectrum (430)
- Drugs: psychiatry (344)
- Substance dependence (407)
- Neurology (1070)
- Clinical trials (epidemiology) (989)
- Epidemiology (1570)

**Notes**

To request permissions go to:
[http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions](http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions)

To order reprints go to:
[http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform](http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform)

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
[http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/](http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/)