

**Find the latest issue of Cochrane Review (8) on the lack of evidence for antidepressants for patients suffering with Autism especially focusing on children, plus the newly discovered technological way to treat patients suffering from Heart failure using just a Telephone. Read more...**

## **Cochrane issue 08**

### **Autism: lack of evidence for Antidepressants**

#### **Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) for Autism spectrum disorders (ASD)**

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are characterised by problems with social interaction and communication, as well as repetitive behaviours and limited activities interests. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are a class of antidepressants which are sometimes given to help anxiety or obsessive compulsive behaviour.

Males are affected about four times more frequently than females, problems usually present in early childhood and continue throughout life. Autism places a considerable burden of care in the family and society and studies have found that only three to ten percent of people with autism are able to live independently as adults.

#### **Therapies for autism spectrum disorders (ASD)**

The heterogeneous nature of problems seen with the autism spectrum means that it is often difficult to be sure which individuals will benefit from the many available therapies. It is also likely that the different timing of therapy in relation to age and onset of problems will change outcomes.

Dr. Gringras, Practical Pediatric Psychopharmacological prescribing, says that, many therapies are invasive, time consuming and expensive and little is known about their potential to cause harm. "Pharmacological treatments have been used most commonly as adjuncts to behavioral intervention to target specific symptoms and behaviours, he added that these treatments have been associated with reductions in sleep disturbance, mood disorder, poor attention or concentration and self harm or aggression towards others."

#### **Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI's)**

Antidepressants most of which are likely to be SSRI are the most commonly prescribed-psychotropic medication for which there has been the greatest increase in prescribing.

The prescribing of SSRI drugs to children and adolescents for any indication has, however, been curtailed since the Committee on Safety in Medicines (UK) and the Food and Drugs Administration (USA) released safety warnings in 2003 and 2004 respectively concerning an increased risk of suicide related behaviours associated with these medications.

Several studies have reported improvements following administration of SSRI's, however the subject numbers are small especially for pediatric patients and serious side effects including increase maladaptive behaviours, urinary retention and seizures are reported.

According to doctors, no drug authority has specifically approved the use of SSRI for autism. The prescribing of SSRI's for autism is therefore either "off-label" or is directed to an associated indicated disorder such as obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) or depression.

**Citation:** Williams K, Wheeler DM, Silove N, Hazell P. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) for autism spectrum disorders (ASD). *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2010, Issue 8. Art. No.: CD004677. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD004677.pub2.

### **Structured telephone support and telemonitoring in the management of patients with Chronic Heart Failure.**

In the context of limited health funding and rapidly expanding population of older patients with Chronic Heart Failure (CHF) it is increasingly difficult for health care systems to provide high quality care to patients with CHF.

Chronic heart failure (CHF) is life-threatening condition that is becoming more common in most countries due to improved treatments for acute coronary syndromes. In addition, with ageing of the population, the number of people at risk of developing CHF has also increased. Improving the management of CHF is a high and growing priority for cardiovascular health services.

Multi disciplinary specialist heart failure clinics are available but only to a minority of patients and do not have the capacity for frequent patient review. Structured telephone support and telemonitoring can provide specialized heart failure care to a large number of patients with limited access to healthcare services.

Chronic heart failure is a complex debilitating syndrome due to cardiac dysfunction that impairs the ability of the ventricle to fill with or eject blood. As a result typical symptoms such as dyspnea and fatigue occur at rest or reduced physical effort.

As the prevalence of CHF increases with the ageing of populations internationally, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain the quality of care. Switching resources from crisis management (by hospitalising patients) to health maintenance (through structured telephone support or home telemonitoring) may be an affordable method to maintain and improve the quality of care for CHF.

To meet the needs of CHF populations who have difficulty accessing multidisciplinary CHF disease management programmes, alternative models of care have been proposed and tested (these alternative models typically involve information communication technology and may include self-monitoring and education delivered via standard telephone or more advanced telemonitoring technology (e.g. electronic transfer of physiological data - electrocardiograph (ECG), blood pressure (BP), weight, pulse oximetry, respiratory rate and medicine administration)

**Citation:** Inglis SC, Clark RA, McAlister FA, Ball J, Lewinter C, Cullington D, Stewart S, Cleland JGF. Structured telephone support or telemonitoring programmes for patients with chronic heart failure. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2010, Issue 8. Art. No.: CD007228. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007228.pub2