Fact sheet: Long-acting injectable antipsychotics (LAIs)

What are antipsychotics?

- Some chronic mental illnesses require daily medication with antipsychotics. Antipsychotics are medicines that are primarily used to treat psychosis\(^1\)
- It can be hard for many people to take their medication every day. Their illness may make it difficult for them to remember to take a pill or may make them believe they do not need it\(^2\)
- People with chronic mental illness who do not take these medicines as prescribed may have more symptoms and worse quality of life\(^2\)

What are long-acting injectable antipsychotics (LAIs)?

- LAIs are antipsychotics than can be injected every 2-12 weeks rather than swallowed each day as a pill or tablet\(^3\)
- LAIs release antipsychotic medicine slowly over an extended period of time after injection by a health care professional (HCP)\(^4\)
- LAIs have found utility in schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder and bipolar disorder because some people may have difficulty taking medication each day\(^2\)
- LAIs have potential advantages and disadvantages:\(^4\)

  **Potential Advantages**
  - Since the medication in the LAI and in the pills is the same, LAIs may reduce daily pill burden
  - Regular contact between patient and mental healthcare team at injection appointments
  - LAIs may provide an opportunity for lower relapse rates in some patients compared to treatment with oral antipsychotics
  - LAIs may provide more stable levels of medication in the blood compared to oral antipsychotics
  - Since adherence is a common a problem with oral medications, potential for better patient outcomes with LAIs

  **Potential Disadvantages**
  - Fewer dosage options compared to pills
  - Since the LAI is designed to have slow release, side effects may persist longer than with oral antipsychotics and it may take longer to reach effective dose of medication compared to pills
  - Because LAIs are given by injection, some patients may experience pain at the injection site
  - Some LAIs need refrigeration

Research shows that some patients may have better outcomes with LAIs than pills

- Appropriate patients should be made aware that LAIs are a treatment option\(^5\)
- LAIs have the potential to reduce relapse, reduce hospitalization, reduce cognitive impairment, and improve quality of life and prognosis\(^6\)

References


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