

Intended for healthcare professionals

🗨️Rapid response to:

Editorials

Benzodiazepines and risk of Alzheimer's disease

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Rapid Response:

Yaffe, Boustani and Fairbanks (1) commented on a carefully conducted study that showed that exposure to benzodiazepines doubled the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. They found it likely that use of benzodiazepines lead to permanent brain damage, which they called neurodegenerative disease. My preference is to call a spade for a spade, which is more easily understood by the patients. It is less clear that we talk about a drug induced harm if we call it a "disease".

Yaffe, Boustani and Fairbanks also say - without any references - that depression and anxiety are considered risk factors for Alzheimer's disease. However, the studies psychiatrists usually refer to when they make such claims do not hold water. A prominent Danish depression researcher recently mentioned in an article, that antidepressant treatment might possibly reduce the doubled risk of dementia in people who have previously had depression (2). He referred to a meta-analysis (3), which is quite typical for the research in this area. It didn't say anything about earlier treatment and there wasn't the least consideration that the increased risk could be caused by the antidepressant drugs the patients had received.

We know that antipsychotics shrink the brain in a dose-dependent manner (4) and benzodiazepines,

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06 October 2014

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