

A pilot randomised controlled trial of community-led ANtipsychotic Drug REduction for Adults with Learning Disabilities

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Plain English summary

Antipsychotic drug reduction for adults with learning disabilities

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Plain English summary

Currently, approximately 50,000 adults with learning disabilities (LDs) in England and Wales are prescribed antipsychotic drugs. These individuals experience frequent occurrences of physical and mental illness and challenging behaviour. Sometimes antipsychotics are prescribed to control challenging behaviour rather than for psychosis despite any real evidence that the drugs help with this behaviour. This study was designed to see if it was possible to take individuals off an antipsychotic drug called risperidone without their behaviour worsening.

Participants were randomly split into two groups and given either their normal amount of risperidone or gradually reduced amounts over 6 months. They were followed up for 9 months. Carers, participants and their doctors were not told which group they were in until the end of the study.

Recruitment was mainly from community LD teams across south Wales and south-west England. All 22 participants were adults and had carers to complete questionnaires about their behaviour before, during and after the study to detect any changes.

Recruitment was difficult and fewer people were recruited than originally planned. This was largely a result of difficulties in identifying appropriate persons to consent and concerns from carers about challenging behaviour re-emerging. Although there were no significant changes in levels of aggression or challenging behaviour at the end of the study, we cannot provide a definite answer to the main question given the small number who took part. The study has provided important insights into the experiences of people taking part in drug reduction studies that should influence future trial development.

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