

Haloperidol plus Promethazine for Psychosis-induced Aggression

Gisele Huf

National Institute of Quality Control in Health, Brazil



Abstract

Background: Agitated or violent behaviour is prevalent in emergency services. Most of these incidents are due to severe psychiatric illness, but neurologic and metabolic issues may also be the underlying cause. The drugs used in such situations should ensure that the person becomes calm swiftly and safely. The combination haloperidol plus promethazine has long been used in developing countries, but NICE 2015 updated guidance now recommends this combination as one possible approach.

Methods: We conducted a systematic review and metanalysis of all randomised trials with usable data focusing on haloperidol plus promethazine for psychosis induced aggression.

Results: We found six studies randomising 1367 participants and presenting data relevant to six comparisons (haloperidol, midazolam, lorazepam, olanzapine, ziprasidone or a combination of haloperidol plus midazolam). Haloperidol plus promethazine is effective and safe. Benzodiazepines work but can cause respiratory depression. Olanzapine intramuscular and ziprasidone intramuscular do seem viable options, but resumption of aggression with subsequent need to re-inject was more likely than with Haloperidol plus promethazine. Haloperidol used on its own without something to offset its frequent and serious adverse effects does seem difficult to justify.

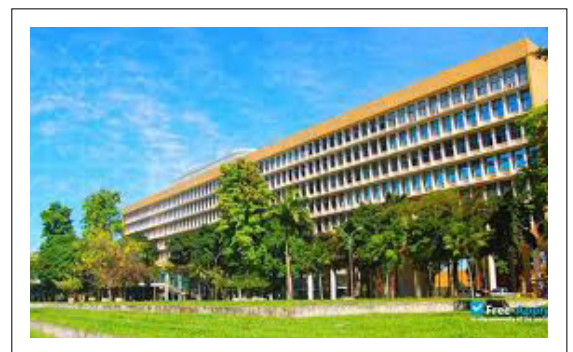
Conclusion: Overall, the quality of evidence was high, haloperidol plus promethazine effectively manages aggressive behaviour swiftly and safely.

Biography:

Gisele Huf graduated in medicine at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) in 1982, completed a residency in psychiatry (UFRJ, 1984), a Master in Epidemiology in 1999 at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) and a PhD in Public Health in 2002 (UERJ). She has been in charge of the Department of psychotropic drugs at the Brazilian Agency of Sanitary Surveillance (1985-1987) and worked as clinical psychiatrist in public hospitals at Rio de Janeiro from 1982 to 1997. Since then she acted as a professor and researcher at the National Institute of Quality Control in Health, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, ministering courses of clinical epidemiology, randomized pragmatic trials and systematic reviews. She worked in close collaboration with the Cochrane Schizophrenia Group on the methodological design of clinical trials and conducted a series of pragmatic trials in Rio de Janeiro's psychiatric hospitals on the management of violent patients at the emergency room.

Recent Publications:

1. Rapid tranquillisation for agitated patients in emergency psychiatric rooms: a randomised trial of midazolam versus haloperidol plus promethazine
2. Rapid tranquillisation in psychiatric emergency settings in Brazil: pragmatic randomised controlled trial of intramuscular haloperidol versus intramuscular haloperidol plus promethazine
3. Factors associated with the use of physical restraints for agitated patients in psychiatric emergency rooms
4. Current practices in managing acutely disturbed patients at three hospitals in Rio de Janeiro-Brazil: a prevalence study
5. Physical restraints versus seclusion room for management of people with acute aggression or agitation due to psychotic illness (TREC-SAVE): a randomized trial



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