Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence and severity of antipsychotic related constipation in patients with schizophrenia: a retrospective descriptive study.

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Reviewer: Takefumi Suzuki

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Review of “Prevalence and severity of antipsychotic related constipation in patients with schizophrenia: a retrospective descriptive study.” by Drs. Marc De Hert et al.

Constipation in patients with schizophrenia frequently associated with antipsychotic (and anticholinergic) medications is a potentially serious problem although it has not gained adequate attention in the literature. The authors examined 273 patients with schizophrenia to investigate prevalence of constipation, to find that 36.3% needed a pharmacological intervention to counteract the problem. The topic is certainly relevant in clinical practice but retrospective nature of the study is an obvious limitation (as acknowledged by the authors) and the following issues warrant a serious consideration.

Please indicate the actual ingredients (or medically universal names) of each bowel medication (instead of showing the market names such as Movicol).

If available, the dose of anticholinergic agents may appear in Results. Also, in supplementary Table 1, it is informative to describe the dosage of each antipsychotic if data are available.

A failure to examine outpatient population would be regarded a limitation. This is because inpatients are more likely treated with higher dose of antipsychotics (and possibly anticholinergics) than outpatients, which may render the former population more susceptible to intestinal motility problems.

Differences among antipsychotics in liability to cause constipation may be briefly noted in Discussion (possibly in relation with anticholinergic properties).

In discussion, “In our study with a younger population of patients with schizophrenia constipation rates were higher than in general population samples.” This needs appropriate citation.

“The true prevalence in patient samples may be even higher since we only obtained data on patients who were either referred to the somatic department or who received treatment for constipation.” This appears contradictory to “There were no other in–(inclusion) or exclusion criteria.” in Method.

Potential problems associated with long-term use of bowel preparations may be
briefly commented on in Discussion, since the authors found that constipation is frequently a chronic issue in this population.

Finally, it would be important to comment on a possibility that antipsychotic dose reduction can be a useful strategy where at all appropriate (Suzuki et al., J Clin Pharm Ther 2007;32(5):525-7).

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.