

Tardive Dyskinesia and Schizophrenia

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Moving Ahead, Another Movement Disorder

For many years schizophrenia was thought to be caused by bad parenting, the so-called "refrigerator mother" was to blame. Today there exists much more information on the disorder and the evidence points to the commonly accepted notion of a chemical imbalance in the brain. Unfortunately, many people still confuse schizophrenia with [multiple](#) personality disorder when, in fact, the two are separate. Schizophrenia however, deals more with people who simply don't have a firm grip on reality.

In recent years researchers have made significant advances in the field and have come up with many neuroleptic (antipsychotic) medications to [treat](#) the disorder. However along with these medical breakthroughs problems have occurred. The most severe side effect is called Tardive Dyskinesia, literally meaning "late movement disorder." (1) Coined in 1964, it is identified by the involvement of numerous "abnormal, [involuntary](#) movements of the orofacial area or extremities." . (2) More specifically, it is characterized by rocking, twisting, jerking, toe tapping, lip smacking, blinking, and most commonly an unusual movement of the tongue. . (1) (2)(3). Interestingly enough, these side effects disappear during sleep. (3)

Neuroleptic-induced Tardive Dyskinesia occurs in roughly fifteen to twenty percent of people taking neuroleptic drugs for several years, and often exceeds fifty percent when all patients treated with neuroleptic are considered. (1)(4) Tardive Dyskinesia develops in people of all ages and walks of life, but the elderly, especially men, and those who are mute, unable to reason and understand competently, and those who have lost their teeth are more likely to develop the disorder. (5)

The cause of Tardive Dyskinesia has not been positively identified, but researchers do know that neuroleptic drugs change the way nerve impulses jump from the pre-synaptic neurons across a synapse to the post-synaptic neurons. (2). Such drugs prevent the neurotransmitter dopamine from reaching the brain, "directly impairing the function of the basal ganglia and the emotion-regulating limbic system and frontal lobes." (6)

Drugs such as Haldol, Navane, Thorazine, Mellaril, Stelazine, Clozaril, and Resperisal are believed to cause Tardive Dyskinesia. (6) Resperidal however, seems to cause a less severe form of Tardive Dyskinesia. (6) Currently researchers are exploring the idea that calcium-channel blockers can treat those with neuroleptic-induced Tardive Dyskinesia. Unfortunately, not enough research has been carried out to date. (7).

Recent studies have shown, though somewhat ambiguously, that GABA (gamma amino butyric acid, a usually inhibitory neurotransmitter) gives some improvement over the symptoms of Tardive Dyskinesia.

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