

An Update on Medication Management of Behavioral Disorders in Autism

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Abstract

Autism spectrum disorder is often comorbid with behavioral disturbances such as irritability, aggression and hyperactivity. Throughout the mid 2000s, several large-scale controlled clinical trials were published leading to the approval of two medications (aripiprazole and risperidone) for treatment of irritability in this condition. This review serves as an update regarding new research findings regarding psychopharmacology for children and adolescents with ASD. In summary, the past five years have yielded no further approved medications with ASD as a primary indication. Important new research results include 1) long-term safety and efficacy data (52 week) regarding treatment with aripiprazole for irritability, 2) consensus regarding potential harm from SSRIs for treatment of repetitive behaviors in children/ adolescents with ASD, 3) a randomized controlled trial showing modest benefits from atomoxetine on hyperactivity, 4) many novel agents currently under investigation.