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

Antipsychotic are the cornerstone in the treatment of schizophrenia. They also have a number of side-effects. Constipation is thought to be common, and a potential serious side-effect, which has received little attention in recent literature. We performed a retrospective study in consecutively admitted patients, between 2007 and 2009 and treated with antipsychotic medication, linking different electronic patient data to evaluate the prevalence and severity of constipation in patients with schizophrenia under routine treatment conditions. Over a period of 22 months 36.3% of patients (99) received at least once a pharmacological treatment for constipation. On average medication for constipation was prescribed for 273 days. Severe cases (N = 50), non-responsive to initial treatment, got a plain x-ray of the abdomen. In 68.4% fecal impaction was found. A high prevalence of constipation, often severe and needing medical interventions, was confirmed during the study period. Early detection, monitoring over treatment and early intervention of constipation could prevent serious consequences such as ileus.