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### **A review on the effects of antidepressants on the prevention of post-stroke depression in patients with acute stroke**

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**Objective:** Post-stroke depression (PSD) is common, affecting about one in three survivors, and is associated with poorer rehabilitation outcomes as well as increased mortality. Prevention of PSD by pharmacological or other therapies is therefore clinically important, as it may improve the general outcome of patients. This review is aimed at evaluating if the use of antidepressants in non-depressed patients helps prevent PSD.

**Methods:** PubMed and CENTRAL databases were searched in Jan 2015 with keywords 'antidepressants', 'stroke', 'prevention' and 'depression'. The search was limited to randomized control trials which studied the effects on antidepressants on stroke patients without existing depression for prevention of PSD. There was no limit on the publication date of the articles, but only English articles were accepted.

**Results:** 9 articles were selected for inclusion in this review. More recent studies suggest that antidepressants may be useful for the prevention of PSD, but overall, the evidence was not strong enough to advocate their use as prophylaxis. Various classes of antidepressants were used in the trials, with no single group showing superiority over the rest, but they were generally well-tolerated. Limitations included small sample sizes, low prevalence of PSD leading to the trials being underpowered, as well as variable study methodology quality.

**Conclusion:** Antidepressants showed promising potential, with the majority of studies showing improvement compared with control. However, methodological issues, high drop-out rates and low participant numbers make it difficult to recommend antidepressant prophylaxis for the prevention of post-stroke depression at this time. More high quality studies need to be done to confirm the promising results which have been shown in recent years.

**Keywords:** Antidepressants, stroke, depression, prevention