

Mental health drug clozapine can kill

An antipsychotic drug, clozapine, may have potentially fatal side-effects, according to a research letter published in *The Lancet*.

Clozapine, which is used to treat schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, has been previously linked with the possible fatal side-effects of agranulocytosis (low numbers of white blood cells), myocarditis (inflammation of the heart) and venous thromboembolism (venous blood clots).

Staffan Högg and colleagues from Norrland University, Sweden, strengthened the association by studying data from the Swedish Adverse Reactions Advisory Committee on the venous thromboembolic complications of clozapine treatment.

Twelve cases were reported between April 1989 and March 2000, of whom five died. Most of the patients had been on the drug for less than three months when the adverse event occurred.

Only one of the patients had a known risk factor for venous thromboembolism (the patient was using an oral contraceptive).

SOURCE: *The Lancet*, April 1, 2000.