

In your experience, can neuroleptic or antipsychotic medication cause catatonia?

Alyssa Phillips:

I've heard that neuroleptic or antipsychotic medication causes the symptoms of catatonia to worsen. Is this true in your experience, and why?

Dr. Fink:

The more potent neuroleptics cause a syndrome which is called the neuroleptic malignant syndrome. That is, neuroleptics will develop a form of catatonia in patients.

That was the way in the 1980s, when we discovered that neuroleptics cause catatonia and we treated the neuroleptic malignant syndrome with ECT, we made the connection between neuroleptics and catatonia. That is, NMS is treatable with ECT.