

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

CLINICAL NEWS

Heads-up: Anticholinergic medications may accelerate cognitive decline in older people. That's according to study findings presented at the recent **American Academy of Neurology** annual meeting in Chicago.

The research looked at the effect of anticholinergics, which include gastrointestinal medications and those used to treat incontinence, on the cognitive skills of 870 Catholic nuns and clergy members who were, on average, 75 years old.

The study was part of a longitudinal study looking at dementia.

Researchers found that study participants who took drugs with anticholinergic properties suffered a 1.5 times faster rate of loss of mental abilities compared to those who didn't take such medications.

"Our findings point to anticholinergic drugs having an adverse impact on cognitive performance in otherwise normal, older people," said study author **Jack Tsao, MD, DPhil**, in a press statement.

Tsao says more research will be required to identify what might be causing the rapid memory loss associated with anticholinergic drugs -- and to identify which drugs specifically may be more likely to cause the cognitive decline.

A new study suggest that obesity may increase a person's risk for requiring long-term care services.

Researchers from **Purdue University** found that older adults who were moderately and severely obese were significantly more likely than people of normal weight to have trouble performing activities of daily living, including toileting, dressing, transferring to and from the bed or chair, and feeding themselves.

The study findings were presented in May 2008 at the **American Geriatrics Society's** annual meeting in Washington, DC.