Tardive dystonia: male:female ratio

Snr: I read with interest the article by Cunningham Owens (Journal, May 1990, 156, 620–634), particularly the part about tardive dystonia, since in our clinic, we are studying this serious, often social, and sometimes physical, invalidating side-effect of neuroleptics. I was surprised by their comment that: “Also there is no known difference in prevalence between the sexes”. Six publications suggest that, on the contrary, there is a difference in prevalence between the sexes showing male:female ratios as follows: Burke et al (1982), 2.5:1; Gimenez-Roldan et al (1985), 1:2:1; Friedman et al (1987), 4:1; Gardos et al (1987), 3:1; Yassa et al (1989), 3:1. This gives an average figure of 2.4 males to every female with tardive dystonia. Only one retrospective publication (125 patients, 30 with tardive dystonia) found an equal ratio for men and women (Miller & Jankovic, 1990).

This difference in male:female ratio is probably one argument for considering tardive dystonia to be a separate entity from tardive dyskinesia, an opinion which has been suggested in several articles. As Yassa et al (1989) write: “tardive dystonia seems to be more common in young male patients while severe tardive dyskinesia is more common in older women”.


