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The effect of ziprasidone on body weight and energy expenditure in female rats

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ABSTRACT

Ziprasidone, a novel antipsychotic agent with a unique receptor-binding profile, has been reported to have lower propensity for weight gain compared with other atypical antipsychotics. Here, we examined the effects of ziprasidone on resting energy expenditure, physical activity, thermogenesis, food intake, and weight gain in female Sprague-Dawley rats. Ziprasidone (20 mg/kg) or vehicle was administered once daily for 7 weeks; and body weight, food intake, resting energy expenditure, locomotor activity, colonic temperature on cold exposure, and abdominal fat were measured. Compared with control animals, ziprasidone-treated rats gained significantly less weight ($P = .031$), had a lower level of physical activity ($P = .016$), showed a higher resting energy expenditure ($P < .001$), and displayed a greater capacity for thermogenesis when subjected to cold ($P < .001$). In addition, ziprasidone-treated rats had a lower level of abdominal fat than did controls, although the difference was not significant. Ziprasidone had no effect on food intake. Our results indicate that, in female Sprague-Dawley rats, a 7-week treatment regimen of ziprasidone induces a significant decrease in weight gain by increasing resting energy expenditure without decreasing food intake and even with a lower level of physical activity. Further studies are needed to elucidate the precise mechanism of lower propensity of weight gain of ziprasidone.

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1. Introduction

Weight gain is a commonly observed adverse effect associated with antipsychotic drug therapy in patients with a variety of psychotic disorders [1–4]. Although most conventional antipsychotics cause modest increases in weight [4–7], the atypical antipsychotics, including clozapine, risperidone, olanzapine,

and quetiapine, are associated with more marked weight gain [3–6,8,9]. Such gain in weight is a common cause of poor adherence to antipsychotic therapy and a potential contributor to comorbidity, including glucose intolerance [10], diabetes mellitus [11], and sleep apnea [12].

In contrast to other atypical antipsychotic agents, ziprasidone, a novel antipsychotic agent with a unique receptor-

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binding profile such as highest 5-HT_{2A}/D2 receptor affinity ratio, 5-HT_{1A} agonism, and unique blockade of serotonin and norepinephrine transporters, has been reported to cause minimal weight gain [2,13–15] or even weight loss [16–18]. The drug also has significant advantages in terms of metabolic effects compared with other atypical antipsychotics [14,19,20].

Despite the well-documented propensity of antipsychotics to cause weight change, the underlying mechanism has yet to be elucidated. To date, all of increased appetite, sedation, and hyperprolactinemia have been suggested to be relevant [21]. Mechanistically, the weight gain associated with olanzapine and clozapine use has been attributed to the high affinities of the drugs for the 5-HT_{2C} serotonin and H1 histamine receptors, where they act as an antagonist [22–25]. Both serotonin and histamine are involved in regulation of food intake and can affect the levels of motor activity and energy expenditure [26,27].

A number of preclinical studies have provided insights into the mechanism underlying antipsychotic-induced weight gain. Many studies have demonstrated increases in body weight and food intake in female, but not male, rats treated with atypical antipsychotics [28–35]. Fell and colleagues [36–38] described a significant weight gain in female rats treated subchronically with haloperidol, risperidone, or olanzapine, but not ziprasidone. The cited authors also reported that only olanzapine significantly increased food intake and that locomotor activity was significantly reduced in all treatment groups including those receiving olanzapine, risperidone, and ziprasidone [39]. A recent study found that long-term olanzapine treatment of male rats induced body weight gain and acute drug injection caused hyperphagia, but treatment with ziprasidone induced neither weight gain nor hyperphagia [40]. Another recent study found that rats treated with haloperidol and ziprasidone showed a significantly decreased weight gain and decreased food consumption compared with control animals [41].

Body weight is determined by the balance between food intake and energy expenditure. As mentioned above, previous studies on antipsychotic-induced weight gain have focused mainly on the effects of such agents on food intake [21,28,30–42]; and only a few preclinical studies have investigated the effects of antipsychotic agents on locomotor activity [39,43], thermogenesis [34,43], and resting energy expenditure [44–46]. In addition, there is no study investigating the effect of ziprasidone on thermogenesis and resting energy expenditure.

The aim of the present study was to evaluate the effects of ziprasidone on resting energy expenditure, thermogenesis, physical activity, food intake, and weight gain in female Sprague-Dawley rats. Based on previous reports [36,39,40], we postulated that ziprasidone would be associated with a low propensity for weight gain because the drug might increase resting energy expenditure without a decrease in food intake or an increase in physical activity.

2. Methods

2.1. Animals and experimental design

Eight-week-old female Sprague-Dawley rats weighing 200 to 250 g were obtained from Orient Bio (Seoul, Korea) and

maintained in a temperature- (21°C ± 2°C) and humidity (50%)-controlled room with a 12-hour/12-hour light/dark cycle (light on at 7:00 AM), with free access to standard rat chow and water. All animal procedures were conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee of the Asan Institute for Life Sciences.

Animals were randomly divided into 2 groups (n = 10 per group). Rats receiving ziprasidone (Pfizer, New York, NY) were given the drug (20 mg/kg) dissolved in 2 mL of distilled water by oral gavage. Control animals received the same volume of distilled water. The two groups did not differ in mean body weight (249.5 ± 12.9 g for rats receiving ziprasidone and 239.5 ± 13.5 g for control rats, *t* = 1.7, *P* = .106) before treatment. Ziprasidone or vehicle was administered chronically for 9 weeks via single daily doses given at 10:00 AM following measurement of food and water intake and body weight. All animals were housed under the same conditions for a period of 2 weeks before drug treatment. We chose the daily drug dose of 20 mg/kg by reference to the data of von Wilmsdorff et al [41], which used a dose of 20 mg/kg in their 18-week study examining the metabolic effect of the drug. This dose in the rats corresponds to human equivalent dose of 3 mg/kg [47,48]. It is somewhat higher than other previous studies using 10 to 12 mg/kg of ziprasidone [34,49]. However, a recent study showed an inverse relationship between ziprasidone dose and body weight gain and food intake in preliminary work using 10, 20 and 25 mg/kg [41]; and we thus used a dose of 20 mg/kg to maximize the protective effect against weight gain in the present work.

2.2. Body weight and food intake measurements

Body weight was measured weekly, and food intake were assessed daily between 8:00 AM and 9:00 AM. Body weight was measured to only 7 weeks of drug administration because various experiments including indirect calorimetry, exposure to cold, and computed tomography (CT) to score abdominal fat levels, performed after 7 weeks of treatment, were expected to stress the animals and thus affect body weight gain. Body weight change was calculated from the day before drug treatment commenced, and biweekly changes are shown. Food intake was recorded daily for each rat to an accuracy of 0.01 g; and the mean food consumption in weeks 2, 4, 6, and 7 was calculated.

2.3. Energy expenditure measurement

Energy expenditure was measured over 1 hour by indirect calorimetry (Columbus Instruments, Columbus, OH) after 7 weeks of ziprasidone or vehicle treatment. Animals were placed in a metabolic chamber after 6 hours of fasting and allowed to acclimatize to the chamber for at least 30 minutes before measurements were made. Sampling and analysis of chamber gas were performed every 10 second for 10 minutes, and the data were averaged. Energy expenditure was calculated according to the following formula: expenditure = (3.815 + 1.232 × VO₂/VCO₂) × VO₂.

2.4. Thermogenesis

After about 9 weeks of ziprasidone or vehicle treatment, animals were placed in a refrigerator maintained at 4°C to test

the thermogenic effect of the drug. Colon temperature was measured immediately and at 30 min, 1 hour, 1.5 hours, and 2 hours after cold exposure using a colonic thermometer (model 52; Harvard Apparatus, Holliston, MA).

2.5. Locomotor activity

The effect of ziprasidone on physical activity, as assessed by movement distance, was also evaluated. The behavioral test was performed between 2:00 PM and 6:00 PM in animals treated with ziprasidone or vehicle for 7.5 weeks. Rats were individually housed and allowed to acclimatize for 1 hour in individual transfer cages in the behavioral testing room. Locomotor activity was evaluated using an Activity Monitor (MED Associates, St Albans, VM) composed of an open-field chamber (43.2 × 43.2 × 30.5 cm) containing 16 × 16 photocells for measurement of horizontal movements. Locomotor activity was measured as the total distance traveled over 60 minutes.

2.6. Quantitation of abdominal fat

To evaluate abdominal adiposity, CT (GE Medical Systems, Milwaukee, WI) was performed on 3 representative rats of each group; and median weight gain values were determined in week 8 of treatment. Rats were placed in the prone recumbent position, and CT imaging was performed on the abdominal region using transverse slices (3 mm in thickness; 21-mm centers). A computer-based image analysis system was used to make detailed comparisons of both visceral and subcutaneous adipose tissue depots.

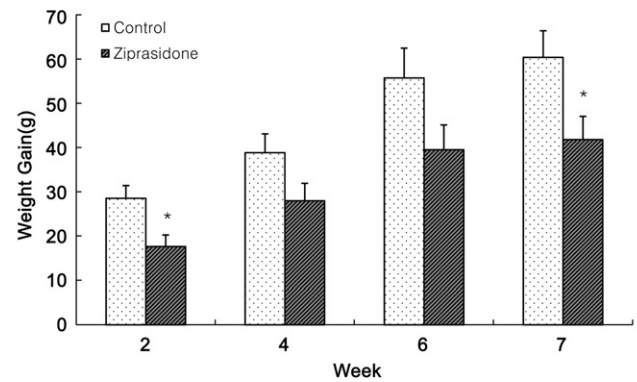
2.7. Statistical analysis

Independent *t* tests were used to compare weight gain, food consumption, resting energy expenditure, body temperature after cold exposure, movement distance, and abdominal adiposity between female rats treated daily for 7 weeks with drug or vehicle. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (v 12.0), with statistical significance defined at an α level < .05.

3. Results

3.1. Effect of ziprasidone on weight gain

Fig. 1 shows the effect of ziprasidone (20 mg/kg) on weight gain over 7 weeks. Weight gain was significantly lower in ziprasidone-treated rats than in controls in both weeks 2 and 7 ($t = -2.80$, $P = .012$, statistical power = 0.800 and $t = -2.34$, $P = .031$, statistical power = 0.374, respectively). Although the difference was not significant, the ziprasidone-treated animals showed a lower level of weight gain than did controls in weeks 4 and 6. By week 7, body weight in the vehicle-treated group had increased by an average of 60.4 ± 19.0 g from the day before treatment, whereas the body weight of the ziprasidone-treated animals had increased by an average of 41.8 ± 16.5 g, that is, 69% of the value of controls.



	Body weight (g), Mean (SD)				
	Week 0	Week 2	Week 4	Week 6	Week 7
Control	249.5 (12.9)	267.11 (16.3)	277.48 (17.3)	289.01 (22.2)	291.32 (22.9)
Ziprasidone	239.5 (13.5)	267.97 (16.8)	278.31 (22.3)	295.17 (29.3)	299.86 (26.8)

Fig. 1 – Effect of ziprasidone (20mg/kg) on body weight gain in female rats treated daily for 7 weeks with drug or vehicle given by oral gavage. Weight gain are shown as means \pm SEMs; $n = 10$ per group. * $P < .05$.

3.2. Effect of ziprasidone on food intake

Food intake in the vehicle- and ziprasidone-treated groups was constant over the entire 7 weeks of the study (Fig. 2). This suggests that the drug suppresses weight gain without inhibiting food intake.

3.3. Effect of ziprasidone on energy expenditure

Resting energy expenditure measured normalized by weight was significantly higher in ziprasidone-treated rats than in controls in week 7 (62.5 ± 11.5 vs 32.3 ± 14.8 kcal/[d kg], $t = -5.13$, $P < .001$, statistical power = 0.999) (Fig. 3A). To exclude the effect of group difference in body weight, we also calculated absolute resting energy expenditure (unnormalized by weight), which was still significantly higher in ziprasidone-treated rats than in controls (18.2 ± 3.5 vs 9.6 ± 4.3 kcal/d, $t = 4.85$, $P < .001$, statistical power = 0.998) (Fig. 3B).

3.4. Effect of ziprasidone on thermogenesis

Ziprasidone treatment resulted in a significant increase in colonic temperature 60, 90, and 120 minutes after exposure to cold ($t = 2.50$, $P = .021$, statistical power = 0.713; $t = 5.47$, $P < .001$, statistical power = 1.000; and $t = 5.07$, $P < .001$, statistical power = 0.999, respectively) compared with that of control animals (Fig. 4). This suggested that ziprasidone was thermogenic.

3.5. Effect of ziprasidone on movement

Ziprasidone significantly decreased movement distance at week 7.5 compared with that of control animals (3590.4 ± 572.7 vs 1880.3 ± 294.7 cm, $t = 2.66$, $P = .016$, statistical

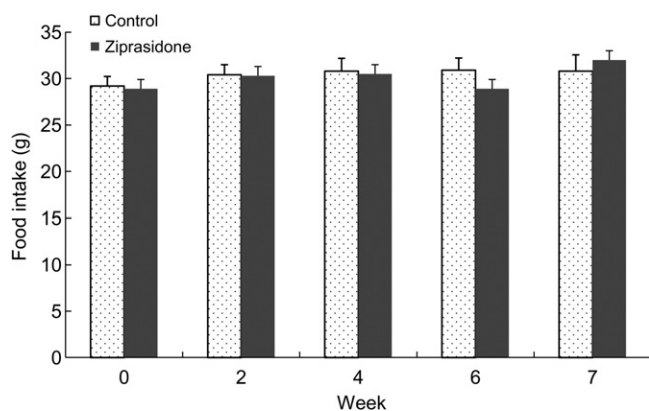


Fig. 2 – Effect of ziprasidone (20 mg/kg) on food intake by female rats treated daily for 7 weeks with drug or vehicle given by oral gavage. Data are shown as means ± SEMs; n = 10 per group.

power = 1.000) (Fig. 5). This suggests that ziprasidone suppresses weight gain even though the level of physical activity is decreased.

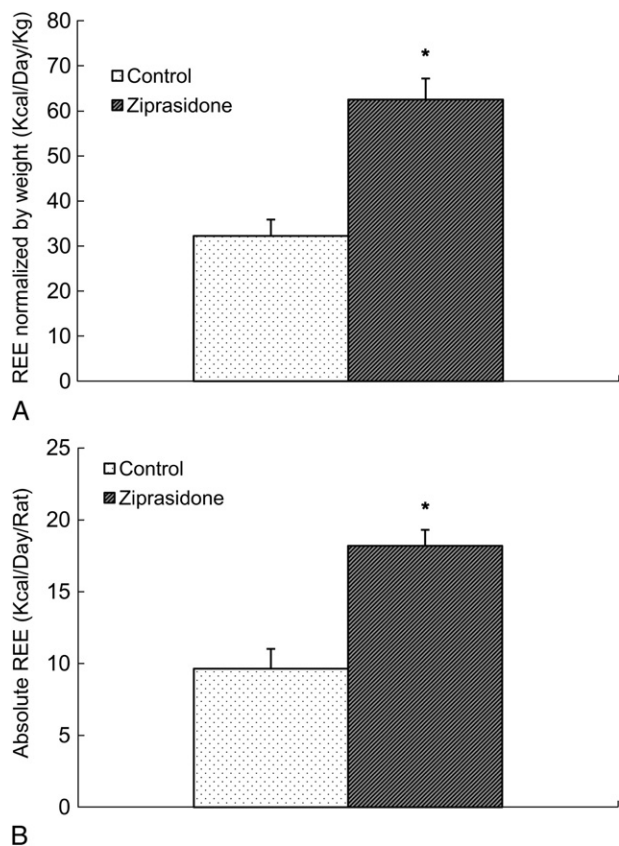


Fig. 3 – Effect of ziprasidone (20 mg/kg) on resting energy expenditure normalized by weight (kilocalories per day per kilogram) (A) and absolute resting energy expenditure (kilocalories per day per rat) (B) in female rats treated daily for 7 weeks with drug or vehicle given by oral gavage. Data are shown as means ± SEMs; n = 10 per group. *P < .05. REE indicates resting energy expenditure.

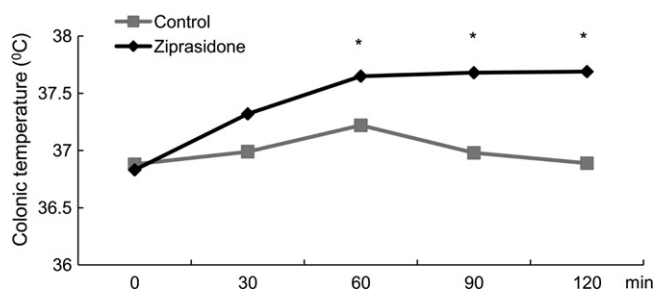


Fig. 4 – Effect of ziprasidone (20 mg/kg) on movement distance over 60 minutes in female rats treated daily for 7 weeks with drug or vehicle given by oral gavage. Data are shown as means ± SEMs; n = 10 per group. *P < .05.

3.6. Effect of ziprasidone on abdominal adiposity

Abdominal CT scans of rats treated with vehicle or ziprasidone (10 mg/kg) showed that drug-treated animals had a lower level of abdominal fat than did controls, although the difference was not significant (Fig. 6A, B). Both the subcutaneous and intraabdominal fat levels of ziprasidone-treated rats were 12% less than those of controls (Fig. 6C).

4. Discussion

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate the effect of ziprasidone on resting energy expenditure and thermogenesis, as well as food intake and body weight, in female Sprague-Dawley rats. In the present work, we found that, compared with control animals, ziprasidone-treated rats gained significantly less weight, consumed the same amount of food, had a lower level of physical activity, showed a higher resting energy expenditure, and displayed a greater capacity for thermogenesis when subjected to cold.

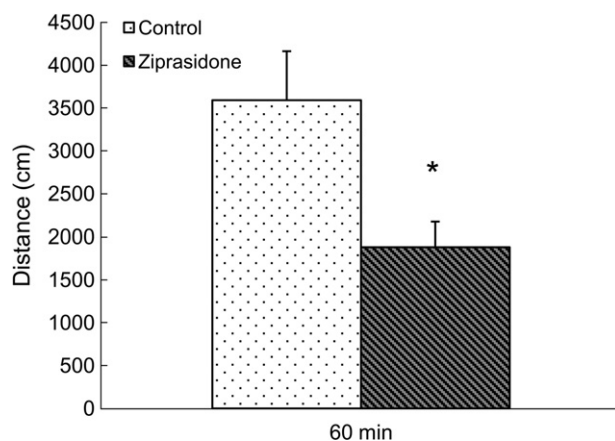


Fig. 5 – Effect of ziprasidone (20 mg/kg) on colonic temperature of female rats after exposure to cold. The animals were treated daily for 9 weeks with drug or vehicle given by oral gavage. Data are shown as means ± SEMs; n = 10 per group. *P < .05.

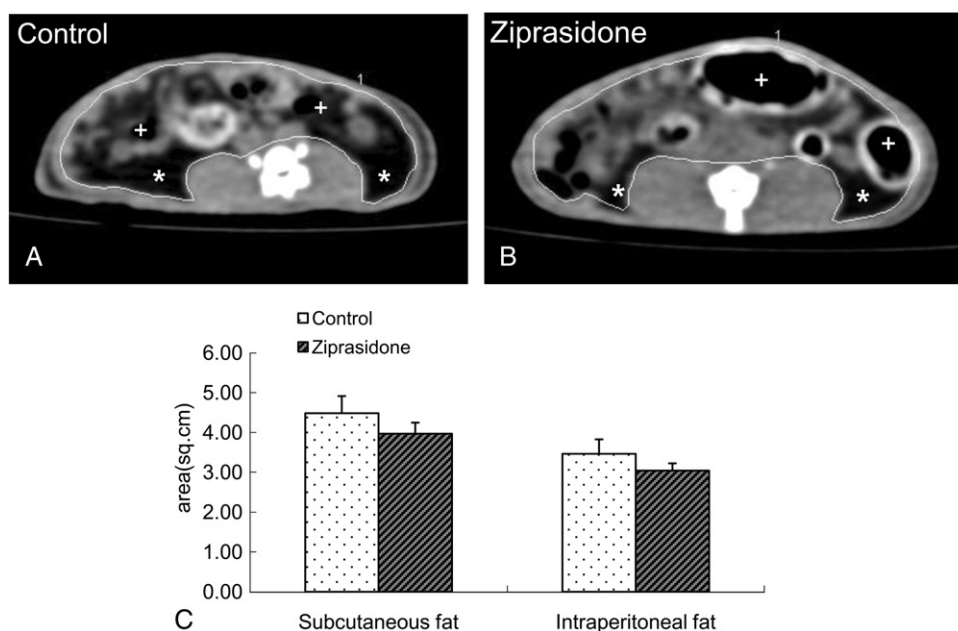


Fig. 6 – Computer tomographic scans of abdominal fat in rats treated daily for 8 weeks with vehicle (A) or ziprasidone (20mg/kg) (B), and the effect of ziprasidone on abdominal adiposity. Data are shown as means \pm SEMs; n = 3 per group. *: intraperitoneal fat, +: bowel gas.

Previous studies found that ziprasidone induced somewhat less weight gain than did other atypical antipsychotics such as olanzapine and risperidone. However, compared with vehicle, the difference in weight gain was not significant [34,36,39,40,49,50]. In the present study, ziprasidone-treated rats showed less weight gain than did control animals. The high dose of ziprasidone used in the present study (20 mg/kg) compared with those of previous reports (2.5–12 mg/kg) may explain the difference; a previous report [41] that used the same dose of ziprasidone as used in the present study also found that weight gain decreased significantly in drug-treated animals. This previous preliminary dosing trial [41] showed an inverse relationship between ziprasidone dose and weight gain when the drug was administered over 2 weeks.

In the present study, compared with control animals, use of ziprasidone significantly decreased physical activity, consistent with results of previous clinical trials that showed a lower level of physical activity (a sedative effect) in patients treated with ziprasidone, although this was less marked than what was observed when clozapine or quetiapine was prescribed [51–53].

Consistent with the results of previous studies [33,34,36,39,40], ziprasidone had no significant effect on food intake. The lack of a hyperphagic drug action partially explains the weight-neutral effect of the drug compared with other atypical antipsychotics that do have such effects (olanzapine is an example) [34,39,42]. However, this does not explain the fact that weight gain in the drug-treated group was less than that in control animals. In addition, when the decrease in physical activity (which would result in a positive energy balance if food intake does not change) is considered, ziprasidone should induce more weight gain than that seen in controls; however, the reverse was the case.

We suggest that an increase in resting energy expenditure may be an intrinsic pharmacological mechanism preventing weight gain when ziprasidone is taken. This may be explained by the fact that the drug has low affinities for the histamine H1 receptors, acts as a partial agonist of the 5-HT_{1A} receptor, and inhibits the reuptake of serotonin and norepinephrine [24,25]. No effects, increased energy expenditure, and decreased energy expenditure following long-term olanzapine treatment have been described in both rats [44–46] and human subjects [54–57]. No clinical study has analyzed the effect of ziprasidone on resting energy expenditure, and further work in humans is needed.

Thermogenesis induced by cold may be an important aspect of ziprasidone action. Increased food intake, shivering, and oxidation of brown adipose tissue can cause an increase in body temperature owing to thermogenic effects [58,59]. Body temperature regulation may also involve the hypothalamic neuropeptide orexin, which has been shown to be important in regulation of food intake and locomotor activity [60]. The mechanism of thermogenesis caused by ziprasidone is unclear, but may be associated with an increase in resting energy expenditure and lipolysis.

A previous study found that haloperidol (1 mg/kg) and olanzapine (1 mg/kg) induced significant increases in adiposity, whereas ziprasidone (10 mg/kg) caused only moderate fat accumulation, compared with controls [34]. However, in the present work, ziprasidone-treated rats showed somewhat lower levels of abdominal fat than did controls, although the difference was not significant. We suggest that the higher dose (20 mg/kg) of ziprasidone used in the present study resulted in accumulation of less fat than that found in the cited work; this notion is indirectly supported by the inverse relationship between drug dose and weight gain noted in the

previous preliminary study [41]. However, selection bias is possible in the present work because we chose only 3 representative rats (that showed median weight gain values) from each group for abdominal adiposity measurement.

In conclusion, our results indicate that, in female Sprague-Dawley rats, a 7-week treatment regimen of ziprasidone induces a significant decrease in weight gain by increasing resting energy expenditure without decreasing food intake and even with a lower level of physical activity. However, owing to the small number of animals used and the fact that only one drug dose was used based on the previous studies without preliminary dose test, our results should be considered preliminary in nature. Another limitation includes that we measured resting energy expenditure and thermogenesis only after treatment, and 1 hour might be short to measure resting energy expenditure. Dose/response studies are needed, and further work with the measurement of metabolic parameters and organ tissue mass would be useful to elucidate the precise mechanism of lower propensity of weight gain of ziprasidone.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest with any of the authors.

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