

# NATURAL HISTORY

- Rapid onset
- Variable progression
- Resolution typically <24 hours of initiation of therapy and cessation of precipitant but duration is influenced by other factors

# DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS

- Neuroleptic malignant syndrome
- Anticholinergic poisoning

**Table 1** Serotonin syndrome (SS) versus neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS)

Feature	SS	NMS
<b>Serotonin syndrome</b>		
Serotonimimetic drug	+++	0
Rapid onset	+++	0
Mental state changes—agitation	+++	Akathisia <sup>a</sup>
Mental state changes—confusion	+	++
Mental state changes—hyperactivity	+++	0
Clonus	+++	0
Myoclonus	+++	0
Ocular oscillations	+++	0
Shivering	+++	0
Tremor	+++	+
Hyperreflexia	+++	0
<b>Neuroleptic malignant syndrome</b>		
Neuroleptic	0	++
Slow onset	0	++
Bradykinesia/stupor	0	+++
Lead-pipe rigidity	0	+++
Autonomic instability	± <sup>b</sup>	++
<b>Non-specific</b>		
Hyperpyrexia	++	++
Diaphoresis	++	+++
Tachypnea	++	+++
Tachycardia	++	+++
Hypertension	++	++
Confusion	++	+++ <sup>c</sup>
Raised creatinine phosphokinase	+	+++

<sup>a</sup>Akathisia and agitation may be hard to distinguish between. <sup>b</sup>Autonomic instability, may only occur in severe cases. <sup>c</sup>Confusion, probably more severe in NMS.

