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Rapid reversal of tolerance to benzodiazepine hypnotics by treatment with oral melatonin: a case report.

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Abstract

A 43 year old woman had suffered from insomnia for the past 11 years and was being treated with benzodiazepines. All attempts to stop benzodiazepine treatment resulted in withdrawal symptoms and a renewal of the insomnia. Treatment with 1 mg of controlled release melatonin enabled the patient to completely cease any benzodiazepine use within two days, with an improvement in sleep quality and no side effects. Examination of urinary 6-sulphatoxymelatonin levels before the melatonin treatment indicated that the levels were very low and lacked the typical circadian rhythm of excretion. Reexamination of 6-sulphatoxymelatonin levels during melatonin treatment revealed the existence of a normal circadian rhythm of excretion. This case may suggest that some of the people suffering from insomnia and addicted to benzodiazepines may successfully undergo withdrawal from these drugs and improve their sleep by means of treatment with melatonin. The results of this single case study warrant further investigation of a larger population by means of a double-blind placebo-drug study.

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