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J Clin Pharm Ther. 2000 Oct;25(5):347-53.



Double-blind randomized controlled trial of baclofen vs. clonidine in the treatment of opiates withdrawal.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: A variety of detoxification methods have been utilized for the treatment of opiate withdrawal syndrome, of which alpha-adrenergic agonists have attracted considerable attention over the last two decades. However, accumulating evidence in rats shows the efficacy of the GABAB receptor agonist, baclofen, in reducing alcohol intake and self-administration of cocaine.

OBJECTIVE: To examine the ability of baclofen, in the management of opiate withdrawal.

METHOD: A total of 62 opiate addicts randomly assigned to treatment with baclofen or clonidine during a 14-day, double-blind clinical trial. All patients met the DSM IV criteria for opioid dependence. Maximum daily doses were 40 mg for baclofen and 0.8 mg for clonidine given three times a day in divided doses. The severity of the opiate withdrawal syndrome was measured on days 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 14 using the Short Opiate Withdrawal Scale (SOWS).

RESULTS: Baclofen and clonidine were equally effective in treating the physical symptoms of withdrawal syndromes. However, baclofen showed a significant superiority over clonidine in the management of mental symptoms.

CONCLUSION: These results suggest that baclofen might be a novel therapeutic agent for opiate withdrawal syndrome. However, a larger study to confirm our results is warranted.

PMID: 11123486

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