

Poster presentation

Venlafaxine for the treatment of depressive episode during the course of schizophrenia

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Background

The emergence of depression in the course of schizophrenia is common and arouses much interest and therapeutic concern. It has been associated with a less-favorable prognosis and increased incidence of suicide. However, relatively few treatment studies have been performed in this area. The use of a combination of antidepressants and antipsychotic agents is controversial.

Material and Methods

We report an open-label study carried out to evaluate the efficacy of the addition of venlafaxine in schizophrenia patients treated with antipsychotics and diagnosed with concurrent depressive episode (DSM-IV criteria). Patients ($n = 19$) who did not show spontaneous improvement after 4 weeks were assigned to a six-week trial with add-on venlafaxine. Patients were evaluated at a one-week interval with the HAM-D, the Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale, and the Clinical Global Impression Scale.

Results

All 19 patients had completed the six week trial. 14 patients (74%) showed significant improvement measured with HAM-D and CGI. The mean venlafaxine dose was 146 mg/day (range: 75–300 mg/d). In most patients there was a parallel decrease in psychotic symptoms.

Discussion

We demonstrate that venlafaxine is effective in the treatment of depression in patients with schizophrenia without causing exacerbation of psychosis.