
PREGABALIN ABUSE AMONG OPIATE ADDICTED PATIENTS

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Introduction: Pregabalin is a novel GABA-analogue approved for the treatment of partial onset seizures, neuropathic pain, and general anxiety disorder. Pregabalin has been classified as a Schedule V drug with a low risk of inflicting abuse or addiction. However, some publications have indicated that pregabalin may have a potential for abuse among patients with past or current opiate addiction.

Aims: We hypothesized that pregabalin might be abused by patients who were undergoing an opiate replacement therapy and never had an indication for taking pregabalin on medical grounds.

Methods: Urine specimens from 124 patients with opiate dependency syndrome and from 111 patients with other addiction disorders (alcohol, benzodiazepines, cannabis, amphetamines) were screened for pregabalin by means of a mass spectrometer analysis.

Results: We found 12.1% of all urine specimens from patients with opiate addiction to be positive for pregabalin. None of the patients concerned had a medical indication for using pregabalin. In the control group, 2.7% of the patients were tested positively for pregabalin, due to their taking it regularly for chronic pain or general anxiety.

Conclusions: Our data suggest that pregabalin is liable to be abused among patients with opiate dependency syndrome. Thus, vigilance and caution are called for when patients with a past or current opiate dependency are exposed to treatment with pregabalin.