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VENLAFAXINE IN THE TREATMENT OF PANIC DISORDER COMORBID WITH DEPRESSION

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The novel antidepressant venlafaxine, acting as both a serotonin and noradrenaline reuptake inhibitor is generally effective for anxious and depressive symptomatology. Recently venlafaxine has been approved for use in treatment of panic disorder. The aim of this investigation is to determine the efficacy of venlafaxine in the therapy of panic disorder complicated by depressive symptoms.

Method: Outpatients aged 19-52 (n=16, 2 male and 14 female), who met ICD-10 criteria simultaneous for panic disorder (with or without agoraphobia) and depressive episode mild severity were treated with venlafaxine in dose 75-150 mg/day (as monotherapy). The patients were evaluated with the Hamilton Rating Scale for Anxiety (HAM-A) and the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS-21) at baseline and weekly during one month and over six months of continued therapy.

Results: Baseline total HAM-A and HDRS scores were 23 ± 7 and 24 ± 5 , accordingly. Clinical improvement was observed after about one week (HAM-A total: $p < 0,01$; HDRS total: $p < 0,004$). The reductions of total using scores from baseline to the end of week 4 were equivalent 78%. Percentage of patients free from panic attacks and depressive symptoms was 37%. After six months all the patients demonstrated panic-free and depressive-free status. The most frequent adverse events were nausea (6,2 %), somnolence (12,5%), which reduced to the end of week one.

Conclusion: The venlafaxine therapy of panic disorder comorbid with depression is associated with significant improvement after four weeks of treatment. There was no difference in response using the rates (HAM-A, HDRS).