

BUPRENORPHINE IN COMORBIDITY OF MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER AND OPIOID USE DISORDER

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INTRODUCTION

Opioid use is considered a growing global health issue. Research findings revealed that the opioid system is involved in mood regulation and it is often difficult to ascertain whether mood symptoms are substance induced or an independent disorder. Opioid use disorder and mood disorders very frequently co-occur and both their clinical features and treatment strategies are closely intertwined.

The purpose of this work is to exemplify through a clinical case report the complexity of diagnostic approach and treatment strategy in patients with comorbidity of opioid use disorder and depression, as well as raising questions about the antidepressant role of buprenorphine, alone or as an adjuvant therapy.

METHODS

We describe the clinical case of a patient attended at Gregorio Marañón Hospital, in Madrid, Spain. This patient received a clinical diagnosis of major depressive disorder and opioid use disorder. We conduct a literature review on the prevalence of the comorbidity between these disorders and the role of buprenorphine in its treatment.

RESULTS

Buprenorphine is a partial μ -opioid agonist, as well as a κ - and δ -opioid antagonist. It binds very tightly to μ , but only partially activates the receptor, which allows buprenorphine to act similarly to full opioid agonists at lower doses.

All the reviewed studies concluded that buprenorphine significantly reduces depression symptoms, self-harm and suicidal ideation in both opiate-dependent patients and patients with major depressive disorder or treatment-resistant depression.

The case presented exemplifies its use to treat a patient who was addicted to heroin and had comorbid major depressive disorder. Through coordinated pharmacological and psychosocial interventions over several months the treatment had positive outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

Evidence demonstrates that buprenorphine provides an important tool for opioid relapse prevention and in reducing depressive symptoms. Nevertheless, further studies concerning its safety and long-term efficacy must be carried out

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