

Double-Blind Comparative Trial with Carbamazepine Vs Diazepam Treatment of Alcohol Withdrawal

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Originally only intended as an anti-epileptic carbamazepine has nowadays a multitude of applications in the treatment of neurological and psychiatric diseases. It is also being used for the treatment of alcohol withdrawal symptoms.

In this study, 83 male alcoholics (age: 18) with severe alcohol withdrawal symptoms were randomly assigned to either carbamazepine (max. 800mg/day) or diazepam (max. 80mg/day) for 7 days. 33 patients on carbamazepine (CBZ) and 34 patients on Diazepam (DZP) completed the study. 2 patients on CBZ were excluded because of delirium tremens on the second day their treatment period. One case who developed ataxia, hypotension on DZP was withdrawn from the study on the second day. 8 patients on CBZ and 5 patients on DZP dropped out because of various reasons (consent withdrawn, violation of protocol, initial abnormal laboratory values). Mini Mental State, CIWA, SCL-90R, Beck Depression Inventory, Global Pathology Assessment were used for clinical assessments. In general, both medicines were found to be equally effective in treating the withdrawal symptoms and not significantly different with respect to side effects. There were mild and transient side effects that were known response to both drugs.

The study suggests that carbamazepine is as effective and safe as diazepam in the treatment of alcohol withdrawal.