

Introduction

Focus on Panic Disorder: Antidepressants in Practice

Panic disorder is a prevalent, chronic, and disabling condition that has a considerable impact on quality of life. Etiologic models postulate dysfunction in several brain neurotransmitters, although increasing prominence is given to the role of serotonin. The development of antidepressants with specific serotonergic activity has facilitated the recognition of effective therapies.

What defines clinical improvement and treatment response in panic disorder? Knowledge of how much improvement, and in which domains of the patient's life, will guide clinicians in setting realistic treatment goals, while standard definitions of response and remission will provide the field with a consistent frame of reference. For a chronic condition typically requiring a long-term treatment strategy, other questions arise. Do the benefits of short-term treatment persist in the long term? When should the clinician consider stopping treatment? We should also recognize that panic disorder is frequently comorbid with psychiatric disorders, such as depression, that further complicate management.

These were some of the questions discussed at the inaugural meeting of the International Consensus Group on Depression and Anxiety, where we were joined by other clinicians and researchers to agree on a consensus statement. In this supplement, you will find the review papers presented and discussed during our closed meeting. These will allow you to follow our deliberations and judge how we formed our consensus views.

We hope that this supplement will prove to be useful and informative to clinicians and that it will stimulate further discussion and research into panic disorder.

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