



Insufficient evidence for baclofen in alcohol withdrawal

Clinical question

How effective is baclofen for patients with alcohol withdrawal syndrome (AWS)?

Bottom line

Oral baclofen 30mg/day (divided into 3 doses) for 10 consecutive days is safe and well-tolerated in the treatment of AWS. Baclofen significantly decreased the Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment of Alcohol Scale Revised (CIWA-Ar) score, and sweating, tremors, anxiety and agitation score. Although there were significantly higher scores for baclofen compared with diazepam on days 2 and 3, on subsequent days the efficacy of baclofen and diazepam were comparable. However, the evidence for recommending baclofen for AWS was insufficient.

Caveat

There was only 1 small study, with only 37 patients, included in the analysis.

Context

AWS is a distressing and life-threatening condition affecting some alcohol-dependent patients who discontinue or decrease their alcohol consumption.¹ Baclofen is a stereoselective gamma-aminobutyric acid B (GABAB) receptor agonist with an approved indication to control spasticity.²

Cochrane Systematic Review

Liu J and Wang L. Baclofen for alcohol withdrawal. Cochrane Reviews, 2011, Issue 1. Article No. CD008502. DOI: 10.1002/14658502.CD005216.pub2.

This review contains 1 study involving 37 participants.

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Further references

1. Fiellin DA et al. *Substance Abuse* 2002;23:83–94.
2. Davidoff RA. *Annals of Neurology* 1985;17:107–16

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