

THE USE OF ANTAGONISTS TO THE OPIOID AND GABA_A RECEPTORS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ALCOHOL AND POLY DRUG USE

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Introduction / Issues / Background: The opioid system relates to craving, while the GABA_A system relates to anxiety. Both systems inactivate the HPA. By using antagonists to both systems we propose a new method for managing poly drug use.

Post detoxification, benzodiazepines have frequently been required and we are investigating the feasibility of replacing them with flumazenil (benzodiazepine antagonist). We use flumazenil infusions and implants to control post withdrawal anxiety in patients with opiate, amphetamine, alcohol, marijuana, synthetic cannabinoid and benzodiazepine withdrawal.

The effectiveness of this treatment in removing benzodiazepine dependence had led us more recently to use flumazenil implants at the time of naltrexone implantation, or, alternatively, after a four-day flumazenil infusion. This evolution of a new protocol to use an opioid antagonist alongside a GABA_A benzodiazepine receptor antagonist appears to give significant benefits in managing poly drug use.

Results: We have noted that, provided naltrexone levels above 2ng/ml are maintained, most poly drug use ceases while blood levels above 1ng/ml appear to stop most of the opiate use. Flumazenil decreases anxiety in most poly drug patients.

Future work: We are seeking collaborators to look at RCTs of naltrexone implants alone and also naltrexone together with flumazenil for poly drug use.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

Dr O'Neil is a Shareholder/Director at Go Medical Industries Pty Ltd