Venlafaxine is effective in GAD

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Efficacy of venlafaxine extended-release capsules in nondepressed outpatients with generalized anxiety disorder: A 6-month randomized controlled trial.

Background: Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is a common chronic disorder. GAD is often but not always associated with depression, [frequently encountered in primary care patients]. Symptoms include excessive, uncontrollable pervasive anxiety, with both psychological and somatic manifestations (e.g., muscle tension, insomnia).

Aim: To test the efficacy of venlafaxine in patients with GAD, without depression.

Methods: Six months, randomized placebo-controlled trial in 251 outpatients. The extended release form of venlafaxine was used in doses adjusted to control symptoms (75-225 mgs.).

Main Findings: Response rates during weeks 6-28 were 69% or higher in the venlafaxine group compared with rates of 42-46% in the placebo group (p< .001). Statistically significant differences in response rate were detected as early as weeks one and two. The most common side effects were nausea, somnolence, dry mouth, and male sexual dysfunction, but the frequency of adverse effects decreased after the first two months.

Limitations: The major limitation in this study was a high drop out rate (59%) during the double blind phase. Those assigned to placebo most often left the study because of unsatisfactory response, while those receiving venlafaxine most often dropped out because of adverse reactions.

Conclusions: Venlafaxine-XR is an effective, well-tolerated treatment for patients with generalized anxiety disorder even without comorbid depression.

Impact on Internal Medicine: This study demonstrates that an antidepressant, Venlafaxine-XR is an effective option for the treatment of GAD, providing an alternative to benzodiazepenes or buspirone. Other antidepressants are likely to be useful as well, but less data are available.