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ATOMOXETINE-INDUCED AKATHISIA IN AN ADULT PATIENT USING FLUOXETINE: A CAUTIONARY CASE REPORT FOR DRUG INTERACTIONS

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OBJECTIVE: Atomoxetine is a non-stimulant approved by the FDA for the treatment of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder in patients aged 6 years and older. Medication-induced akathisia is a rare adverse effect of atomoxetine, and this case report describes akathisia that developed following atomoxetine use.

CASE: (The patient consent must be provided and specified with appropriate terms). A 49-year-old female patient with a 20-year history of major depressive disorder had been receiving fluoxetine 60 mg/day. Atomoxetine 60 mg/day was added to the treatment regimen as an augmentation strategy to improve cognitive symptoms. On the sixth day, she developed restlessness, inability to remain still, a constant urge to move, and involuntary motor movements. With worsening symptoms, she admitted to our emergency department three times; benzodiazepine and propranolol were administered respectively, and fluoxetine and atomoxetine were discontinued. At her last admission, persistent akathisia and suicidal ideation were noted, and she was hospitalized for suicidal risk with preliminary diagnoses of medication-induced akathisia and recurrent depressive episode. Treatment with mirtazapine 30 mg/day, diazepam 15 mg/day, and propranolol 60 mg/day was initiated; by day four, the BARNES Akathisia Rating Scale score decreased from 13 to 0, after which diazepam and propranolol were discontinued, and mirtazapine dose was increased. (Written informed consent was obtained for the publication of case)

DISCUSSION: Two cases of atomoxetine-induced akathisia have been reported in the literature, both in young patients; our case suggests that atomoxetine may also cause akathisia in adults. Atomoxetine is primarily metabolized by cytochrome CYP2D6, and fluoxetine is a potent CYP2D6 inhibitor. Their combination may increase atomoxetine levels, posing a risk for akathisia.Therefore, a lower starting dose and close monitoring are recommended when atomoxetine and fluoxetine are used in combination. In our case, the concomitant use of both drugs increased the risk of akathisia.

Keywords: Adverse effects, akathisia, atomoxetine, depression, fluoxetine