

A qualitative study of gabapentin use and misuse: Perspectives of substance abuse treatment providers

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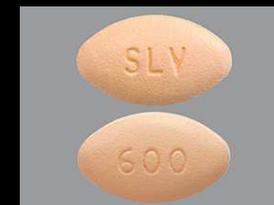
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Gabapentin

- γ -aminobutyric acid (GABA)-analogue
- Treatment of epilepsy and neuralgia
- Prescribed off-label

- Low addictive liability level
- Prescription required
- Not scheduled under CSA
- Brands – Neurontin, Horizant, Gralise



Gabapentin misuse

Abuse and Diversion of Gabapentin Among Nonmedical Prescription Opioid Users in Appalachian Kentucky

Gabapentinoid Abuse in Order to Potentiate the Effect of Methadone: A Survey among Substance Misusers

Colin R.W. Baird^a Pauline Fox^b Lesley A. Colvin^a

Potentiation of the Effect of Buprenorphine/Naloxone With Gabapentin or Quetiapine

TO THE EDITOR: Although it is an effective treatment for opioid dependence, buprenorphine/naloxone may be misused. We report here a case of potentiation of buprenorphine/naloxone with gabapentin and quetiapine.

Gabapentin misuse, abuse and diversion: a systematic review

Rachel V. Smith^{1,2,3}, Jennifer R. Havens^{1,2} & Sharon L. Walsh^{1,4,5}

Prescription Medication Misuse Among Opioid Dependent Patients Seeking Inpatient Detoxification

Timothy Wilens, MD,^{1,2} Courtney Zulauf, BA,¹ Denece Ryland, RN,² Nicholas Carrellas, BA,¹ Isela Catalina-Wellington, RN, BSN²

An ethnographic decision model of the initiation of gabapentin misuse among prescription and/or illicit opioid (mis)users

Mance E. Buttram^{a,*}, Steven P. Kurtz^a, Theodore J. Cicero^b, Jennifer R. Havens^c

Gabapentin use during treatment

A Proof-of-Concept Randomized Controlled Study of Gabapentin: Effects on Cannabis Use, Withdrawal and Executive Function Deficits in Cannabis-Dependent Adults

Barbara J Mason¹, Rebecca Crean¹, Vivian Goodell¹, John M Light², Susan Quello¹, Farhad Shadan³, Kimberly Buffkins¹, Mark Kyle³, Murali Adusumalli³, Adnan Begovic³ and Santosh Rao³

Importance of Gabapentin Dose in Treatment of Opioid Withdrawal

Mehrdad Salehi, MD,* Gholam Reza Kheirabadi, MD,* Mohammad Reza Maracy, PhD,† and Mansour Ranjkesh, MD*

Original Investigation

Gabapentin Treatment for Alcohol Dependence
A Randomized Clinical Trial

Barbara J. Mason, PhD; Susan Quello, BA, BS; Vivian Goodell, MPH; Farhad Shadan, MD; Mark Kyle, MD; Adnan Begovic, MD

Gabapentin for the treatment of alcohol use disorder

Barbara J. Mason [Pearson Family Professor].

Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Pilot Trial of Gabapentin During an Outpatient, Buprenorphine-Assisted Detoxification Procedure

Nichole C. Sanders, PhD,² Michael J. Mancino, MD,³ W. Brooks Gentry, MD,⁴ J. Benjamin Guise, MD,⁵ Warren K. Bickel, PhD,⁶ Jeff Thostenson,⁷ and Alison H. Oliveto, PhD³

Aims

- Examine substance abuse treatment providers' experiences with gabapentin prescribed to clients during treatment and detox.
- How is gabapentin used in these settings?
- What are the benefits and risks for clients?

Methods

- Qualitative interviews with key informants
 - Currently working with opioid-dependent clients in a treatment or detox center
 - Specialized knowledge of treatment practices and client experiences
- Interviews conducted:
 - Between August 2018 and January 2019
 - South Florida
- Thematic analysis using descriptive and in vivo coding schemes

Characteristics of key informants

Title	Education	Years of experience	Setting
Program Director	Master of Social Work	6	Public-pay inpatient treatment center
Operations Supervisor	BA	7	Private-pay inpatient treatment center
Clinical Director	BA	25	Private-pay inpatient treatment center
Primary Therapist	MA, Counseling	10	Private-pay inpatient treatment center
Primary Therapist	MS, Family Therapy	7	Public-pay mental health facility
Primary Therapist	Master of Social Work	5	Public- and private-pay treatment center
Social Worker	Master of Social Work	15	Private-pay inpatient treatment center
Registered Nurse	BS, Nursing	2	Detoxification center
Clinical Director	MS, Psychology	8	Private-pay inpatient treatment center
Chief Exec. Officer	Master of Social Work	10	Intensive outpatient center
Therapist	MS, Counseling	25	Private practice
Therapist	MS, Counseling	15	Private practice

Therapeutic use

- Treat a physical and mental health symptoms which may interfere with treatment.
 - Cope with withdrawal
 - Stabilize mood
- “[Clients] might need something because [they’re] coming off serious drugs, feeling sick, and getting their faculties back.”
- “Gabapentin will indubitably help someone that’s experiencing anxiety and the vast majority of people that are recently sober are experiencing anxiety.”

Misuse among treatment clients

- Gabapentin does not have the same risks as opioids and is used as an alternative to other controlled medications.
- May occur following treatment because clients:
 - “believe they need something to cope with their symptoms.”
 - make an impulse decision due to boredom or social influences
- Gabapentin misuse is a potential first marker of relapse.
 - “Gabapentin misuse will precede a recurrence of heroin or crack or other drugs they would prefer to use.”
 - “They go from abusing gabapentin and Suboxone and Subutex... they go from that right back to their drug of choice... heroin, crack.”

Gabapentin use during treatment

- Policies regarding gabapentin administration vary.
- Clients may be allowed to take it for physical or mental health problems.
 - “There’s really no hesitancy to prescribe [gabapentin].”
 - “When clients are discharged, they’re given [gabapentin] as part of their discharge medication so they continue using it.”
- Four KIs said clients will be asked to taper gabapentin during treatment.
 - “Everyone’s becoming aware of [misuse] now. We always gotta stay ahead of the curve. If we see [gabapentin misuse] starting to develop, we gotta nip it.”

Lingering questions

- KIs had conflicting perceptions about gabapentin:
 - It is generally beneficial for clients
 - It may be misused by some clients
- “It would help people in the centers to know why gabapentin is being prescribed and all the multi-uses of it.”
- As to whether gabapentin should be prescribed to clients, “There’s no clear-cut answer. I’d love to hear somebody say there is. And it’s like, ‘Tell me!’”

Discussion

- According to KIs, gabapentin has several benefits for treatment clients:
 - Moderated withdrawal symptoms
 - Treatment of physical pain and mental distress
- Considering the setting and population, gabapentin misuse is not surprising.
- Possible first indication of relapse.
- KIs noted that more research is needed:
 - Clinical trials
 - “Real world” experiences in treatment and post-treatment settings

Limitations

- Experiences may not be representative of treatment providers in other settings or locations
- Small convenience sample from South Florida
- Potential for recall bias or interviewer effects.

Next steps

- Additional epidemiologic research among treatment clients
- How to best use gabapentin in treatment settings
- Effect of prescribed gabapentin on client recovery



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