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Promising Outcomes Seen in Study on Excessive Daytime Sleepiness

Researchers see sodium oxybate (Xyrem®, Orphan) as a potential monotherapy for narcolepsy both in patients with and without cataplexy, according to a recent symposium about current and possible future treatments for excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS) associated with narcolepsy. The lecture was held last week in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies in Philadelphia.

The data presented included results from a recently completed trial to assess sodium oxybate oral solution as a treatment for EDS associated with narcolepsy. Sodium oxybate is the only Food and Drug Administration-approved medication for the treatment of cataplexy, a prominent symptom of narcolepsy.

The trial evaluated improvement in EDS of patients with narcolepsy when a dose of 4.5, 6 or 9 grams of sodium oxybate was added to unchanged stimulant therapy. This double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized trial assessed 228 patients over an eight week treatment period in 40 sleep centers in North America and eight in Europe.

In the study, co-primary end points were changes in the Epworth Sleepiness Score (ESS) and Clinical Global Impressions of Change (CGI-c). The ESS results were statistically significant at the 6 gram ($p < 0.001$) and 9 gram ($p < 0.001$) doses. A statistically significant response ($p \leq 0.001$) was seen at all sodium oxybate dose levels in the CGI-c using a responder analysis that classified "responders" as patients who were "much improved" or "very much improved" as assessed by the treating physician.

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Study Shows Positive Results With Insomnia Drug

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Eszopiclone (Estorra™, Sepracor) improves sleep maintenance irrespective of the level of pretreatment wake-time after sleep onset (WASO), according to a new study. Additionally, greater improvement was evident in those with greater baseline severity. The research was described last week at the annual meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies in Philadelphia.

Presented by Andrew Krystal, MD, of Duke University Medical Center, Durham, N.C., the study evaluated the efficacy of eszopiclone for sleep maintenance in patients who were stratified by their degree of high or low WASO at baseline.

This study included patients who were 21 to 69 years of age, met DSM-IV1 criteria for primary insomnia, and reported a total sleep time of less than 6.5 hours each night and/or a time to sleep onset of more than 30 minutes.

Because the six-month randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, multicenter study didn't require subjects to have sleep maintenance problems in order to participate, a reanalysis of the data was carried out to better determine if the compound improved sleep in those patients with difficulties staying asleep.

Analysis included stratifying subjects into subgroups on the basis of baseline WASO. Subjects were grouped into a low WASO group (≤ 60 minutes) or a high WASO group (> 60 minutes). In the low WASO group, treatment with eszopiclone ($n=320$) resulted in a median WASO of 16.5 minutes compared to a median WASO of 25.4 minutes for patients given placebo ($n=111$; $p=0.0035$). In the high WASO group, the median WASO following treatment with eszopiclone ($n=189$) was 37.5 minutes compared with 65 minutes when treated with placebo ($n=55$; $p=0.0033$).

"The reanalysis of the data demonstrated that eszopiclone improved WASO across the range of pretreatment severities studied, and the improvement was greatest in subjects who had the greatest difficulty staying asleep," Dr. Krystal said. "These findings reinforce my belief in the capacity of eszopiclone to help those patients with sleep maintenance problems."

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Survey: 30 Percent of Philadelphians May Have an Underlying Sleep Disorder

A recent survey of Philadelphia area residents revealed that while 30 percent of them are excessively sleepy, only about one-third of these individuals have sought medical attention for the diagnosis or treatment of this symptom. This response indicates that people may not understand that their sleepiness could be the sign of an underlying medical condition.

The survey, sponsored by Awake in Philly, a local community education group focused on sleep and sleep disorders, also showed that sleepiness could be affecting residents' ability to safely and successfully accomplish daily tasks. Thirty-seven percent of all respondents reported having fallen asleep while on the job, and 16 percent reported having dozed off while driving an automobile at least twice in the past 12 months.

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Sleep Deprivation, Daytime Sleepiness Rampant Among First Year Med Students

First year medical students are sleep deprived and show a high incidence of daytime sleepiness, according to research presented at the Associated Professional Sleep Societies' Annual Meeting in Philadelphia.

While several studies have looked at the sleep habits of medical residents, interns and other postgraduate medical students, little research has focused on students in their first year of medical school. The study authors found that the sleep deprivation rampant among interns and residents is also prevalent in younger medical students, who average about 6.8 hours of sleep a night. Most adults sleep an average of 6.9 hours on weeknights but catch up on weekends, sleeping about 7.5 hours a night, according to the National Sleep Foundation's 2002 Sleep in America poll. Sleep experts usually recommend an average of 7 to 9 hours of sleep for adults, with 7.4 to 8 hours recommended for young adults.

"The results of this study clearly show that sleep deprivation and daytime sleepiness start early for those preparing for a medical career," said study author Meir H. Kryger, MD, of the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada. Dr. Kryger noted the study didn't measure how the students' lack of sleep might have impacted their performance.

Twenty-six percent of the first year medical students reported daytime sleepiness, with 33 percent having an Epworth Sleepiness Scale score of 10 and above. This score is in the range seen in people with sleep disorders.

The study shows that students appear to try to deal with their daytime sleepiness by napping and using caffeine. While less than one-quarter of the students napped daily (14 percent), nearly eight out of 10 (78 percent) napped at least once a week; the average nap time was about an hour. A majority of the students (82 percent) use caffeine products, with an average caffeine intake of 2.2 cups/day.

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Study: Cigarette Smoking Has Detrimental Effects on Sleep

Cigarette smoking has detrimental effects on sleep, according to research presented at the Associated Professional Sleep Societies' Annual Meeting in Philadelphia.

Researchers found that cigarette smoking causes difficulty initiating and maintaining sleep as well as daytime sleepiness. Some of these effects are mediated via nicotine withdrawal.

In this study, researchers analyzed 327 patients referred to the sleep lab at Kings County Hospital Center in Brooklyn, New York, from January 2002 to October 2003. They categorized the total population, as well as each race/ethnicity separately, into smokers and nonsmokers to examine if there's any significant difference in the prevalence of OSA among any of the groups.

Results concluded that while cigarette smoking may have detrimental effects on sleep and nocturnal oxygen desaturation, it's not, by itself, a predictor of OSA.

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Survey: Many Chinese Children Not Sleeping Enough

Many Chinese children are falling well-below the recommended nine hours of sleep per night, according to a recent survey by the China Youth and Children Research Center.

The survey, conducted among 5,846 students in Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and seven other cities, showed that 10.4 percent of those under 12 years old slept less than eight hours a day.

Among children ages 13, 14 and 15, 22.1 percent, 33.1 percent and 44.6 percent, respectively, were sleeping less than eight hours per day.

Experts blame it mainly on China's highly competitive education system, Chinadaily.com reports. Even children in their early teens are made to focus on tests to enter prestigious high schools.

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