

3rd International Conference and Exhibition on **Addiction Research & Therapy**

August 04-06, 2014 Hilton-Chicago/Northbrook, Chicago, USA

Detoxification methods of benzodiazepines mono-dependence: Application and comparison

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Benzodiazepines are among the most common drugs of abuse in Egypt. The severe discomfort experienced by patients stopping long-term benzodiazepine use led to the development of treatment strategies for discontinuing these medications. The study aims to evaluate different detoxification procedures which have been followed to manage benzodiazepines dependence and to assess their efficiency in controlling withdrawal symptoms and relapse rates. The study has been conducted in the center of Psychiatry, Neurology and Neurosurgery, Faculty of Medicine, Tanta University, Egypt. It lasted 45 days and was divided into three phases; pretreatment phase (7 days), detoxification phase (8 days) and follow-up phase (30 days). Three different methods of detoxifications of benzodiazepines dependences were applied and included 1) flumazenil administration (1 mg/500 ml saline twice daily) as the main line of treatment with low doses of oxazepam given orally during the first three nights; 60 mg, 30 mg and 15 mg on the first, second and third nights of detoxification phase respectively, 2) using oxazepam with gradual tapering and 3) abrupt discontinuation of benzodiazepines drug with symptomatic treatment. Screening of benzodiazepines and other drugs of abuse in urine was performed using rapid screening test and Viva- A analyser. Flumazenil infusion with low doses of oxazepam appeared to be more effective in controlling withdrawal symptoms after benzodiazepine discontinuation with less relapse rate than oxazepam tapering or abrupt discontinuation with symptomatic treatment. Oxazepam tapering over 8 days proved to be the worst of the detoxification methods regarding severity of withdrawal and relapse.

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