J Addict Res Ther 2017, 8:4 (Suppl)
DOI: 10.4172/2155-6105-C1-031

Improving clinical outcomes for management of heroin and alcohol dependence using sustained release naltrexone

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Oral naltrexone has been used effectively to manage problem opiate and alcohol use but patient noncompliance limits its utility. Over the past decade an increasing body of research has suggested that the use of sustained release depot naltrexone preparations can overcome this issue and deliver improved clinical outcomes. These preparations commonly involve the use of naltrexone polymer/co-polymer base formulations administered subcutaneously or intramuscularly and depending on the formulation and mode of administration can deliver levels of blood naltrexone between 30 to 180 days. At the same time, research findings from pharmacogenetics has also converged to identify variables including genetic markers and drug use history differences that play a major role in mediating the response to treatment by naltrexone. The establishment of clinical procedures to maximize use of oral and sustained release formulations, and characterization of clinical markers to identify those patients who are most likely to benefit from naltrexone will ultimately provide significant benefit to both patients and clinicians by optimizing treatment outcome.

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