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Pharmacological treatments for Addictive Disorders

Alcohol and illicit substances' addiction pose a major public health and economic burden on societies worldwide. Approved medications are available for alcohol (disulfiram, naltrexone and acamprosate) and opiates addiction (methadone, buprenorphine and naltrexone). Currently, there are no approved pharmacological treatments for stimulants or cannabis addictions. Psychotherapeutic interventions remain the main way of treatment; however, high rates of relapse make the process of finding effective medications an urgent task. Recently few medications have been showing positive signals for cannabis withdrawal and for both cocaine and methamphetamine addiction. Modafinil (provigil), topiramate (topamax), disulfiram (antabuse) and bupropion (zyban/wellbutrin) are four such promising medications for stimulant dependence. Buspirone (buspar), nefazadone and marinol are promising for cannabis withdrawal. Recently, advances in immunotherapy led to the development of vaccines and monoclonal antibodies against addictive drugs; most promising of them are nicotine and cocaine. An overview of available medications for addiction will be presented as well as data from clinical studies of other promising medications.

Biography

Ahmed Elkashef is an Addiction Psychiatrist Board Certified in General Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine. He completed his Internship and Residency Training in Psychiatry in 1990 at the University of South Carolina and the University of Maryland, followed by Neuropsychiatry Fellowship at the National Institute of Mental Health, Neuropsychiatry branch in 1992, where he stayed on as a Senior Staff Fellow till 1996. In 1997, he moved to the National Institute on Drug Addiction (NIDA) as the Chief of the Clinical Trials branch in the division for Medications Development till 2010. In 2011, he joined the National Rehabilitation Center in Abu Dhabi as the Head of Research and Studies section. He is also an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at George Washington School of Medicine. His research focus and publications are in addiction, psychopharmacology and neurobiology of mental illness. He has published extensively in peer reviewed journals and authored many book chapters and scientific reviews.

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