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MEETING ABSTRACT

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Nalmefene and concomitant opioid therapy: a systematic analysis of the global WHO pharmacovigilance database

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Background: Nalmefene (Selincro®) is a selective opioid receptor antagonist, which was licensed in February 2013 in Europe and in April 2014 in Switzerland for the reduction of alcohol consumption in adults with a high drinking risk level.
Methods: 200 reports of adverse drug reactions of nalmefene have been documented worldwide in the global WHO pharmacovigilance database. Reports were analysed regarding concomitant opioids therapy.
Results: The majority of patients (105; 53%) was aged between 45 and 64 years, 135 patients (68%) were male. In 21 cases (10.5%) nalmefene and an opioid were administered concomitantly. In 13 patients (69%) nalmefene was combined with methadone, in 1 with morphine, in 1 with fentanyl, in 2 with buprenorphine, in 2 with codeine and in 2 with oxycodone. Only 3 patients, who had any of these combinations were female (14%), the median age was 44 years (min. 28, max. 66). In 15 cases the terms “opiate withdrawal symptoms”, “withdrawal syndrome” or “drug withdrawal syndrome” were coded. Symptoms included tachycardia, agitation, diarrhoea, abdominal pain. Until now, the regional pharmacovigilance center in Zurich received 4 cases of nalmefene combined with opioids.
Discussion: The combination of nalmefene with opioids should be avoided as this interaction may cause withdrawal symptoms by competitive binding at the opioid receptors. A detailed medical history or a toxicological screening is recommended.

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