THE SPEED OF ONSET OF ACTION OF ALPRAZOLAM-XR COMPARED TO ALPRAZOLAM-CT IN PANIC DISORDER

Aim: The aim of the study was to compare the speed of onset of action of the extended release (XR) formulation of alprazolam with that of the compressed tablet (CT) formulation in a sample of outpatients with DSM-IV panic disorder.

Data Source: Diary records of hourly antianxiety benefit from a 9-week open label switch study, in which 30 patients with DSM-IV diagnoses of panic disorder were stabilized on alprazolam-CT for 3 weeks and then switched to an equivalent milligram dose of alprazolam-XR, were used to examine the timing and magnitude of benefit on both formulations.

Results: The magnitude of benefit at the first hour after the first morning dose was similar before and after the switch to alprazolam-XR. The peak benefit, measured over the hours after the first morning dose, was also similar and 90% of peak benefit was achieved in the first hour on both formulations. In addition, mean time to peak benefit was similar (1.5 hours for alprazolam-CT versus 1.6 hours for alprazolam-XR) and the percent of patients achieving peak benefit in the first hour was also similar: 64% on alprazolam-CT and 71% on alprazolam-XR. Additional analyses indicate that the mean benefit achieved in the first hour on the compressed tablet formulation was not sustained beyond 5.1 (SD 1.7) hours while that on the extended release formulation was sustained for 11.3 (SD 4.2) hours. The results, together with previous findings of equivalent efficacy on the two formulations but a clinically and statistically longer duration of therapeutic action on alprazolam-XR, are discussed.

Conclusion: The results suggest that the speed of onset on alprazolam-XR is similar to that on alprazolam-CT. These results must be viewed in the context of the study limitations including its small size, the lack of independence of groups in a switch study, and the limitations of the diary records used.