

Gabapentin for the prophylaxis of alcohol withdrawal

Caroline Kruszecki, PharmD¹; Tyler Cooper, MD¹; Poorvi Shah, PharmD, BCCCP¹

1. Advocate Christ Medical Center & Children's Hospital, Advocate Aurora Health

Background

- Complicated alcohol withdrawal is associated with increased in-hospital morbidity and mortality, length of stay, health care costs, ventilator use and duration, and acute medical and surgical complications.
- Benzodiazepines (BZDs) are 1st line agents for prophylaxis for inpatients at risk of developing severe/complicated withdrawal, but they pose a risk for over-sedation, delirium, negative neurologic sequelae, and alcohol-BZD codependence.
- There is a paucity of data regarding alternative prophylactic agents to BZDs for patients who are not yet experiencing signs of withdrawal.
- Gabapentin indirectly modulates GABA neurotransmission by inhibiting voltage-dependent calcium channels leading to anxiolytic, sedative, and anticonvulsive properties.
- Gabapentin's role as an adjunct in acute treatment of alcohol withdrawal syndrome (AWS) has been established, but its role in prophylaxis warrants further investigation.

Objective

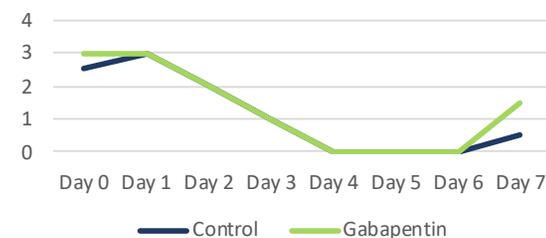
Determine the safety and efficacy of gabapentin as an add-on prophylactic agent for preventing patient progression to severe AWS and any associated complications in hospitalized patients at risk of developing AWS.

Results

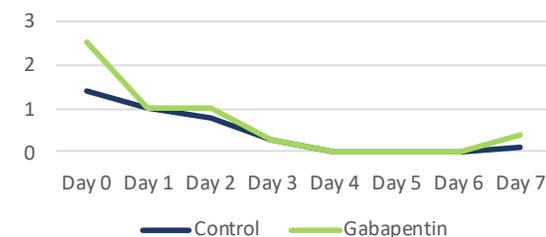
Baseline Characteristics	Gabapentin group (n=15)	Control Group (n=30)	P-value
Age (yr), m (IQR)	52 (42-62)	56 (52-66)	0.29
Sex (male), n (%)	5 (16.7%)	25 (83.3%)	0.78
Daily alcohol intake, m (IQR)	11.0 (7.0-22.0)(n=12)	7.5 (5.3-11.0)(n=27)	0.19
History of AUD, n (%)	14 (93.3%)	24 (80.0%)	0.24
Clinical Outcomes	Gabapentin group (n=15)	Control Group (n=30)	P-value
Progression to severe AWS, n(%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	1.00
Cumulative BZD*, m (IQR)	4 (2.0-5.0)(n=11)	5 (1.5-9.0)(n=14)	0.91
Hospital LOS (hrs), m (IQR)	102.8 (73.8-161.8)	85.3 (60.0-158.0)	0.39
ICU LOS (hrs), m (IQR)	44.6 (30.3-57.4)(n=3)	85.5 (70.0-100.0)(n=6)	0.03**

m: mean; IQR: interquartile range; AUD: alcohol use disorder; ICU: intensive care unit
**lorazepam equivalence; **p<0.05 denotes statistical significance

Maximum Daily CIWA Scores



Average Daily CIWA Scores



Methodology



Design:

Single-center retrospective chart review



Participants:

≥18 years old hospitalized patients at risk of AWS with initial Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment for Alcohol (CIWA) scores <8



Exclusion criteria:

- Active withdrawal upon admission
- Initial CIWA >8
- BZD or gabapentin as a home medication



Groups:

Patients who received gabapentin prior to a reported CIWA score ≥8 vs those that did not

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Primary endpoint:

Rate of progression from CIWA scores <8 to severe AWS, defined as two CIWA scores >15 within an 8-hr time period

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Secondary endpoints:

- Average and max patient CIWA scores
- Need for rescue medications
- Hospital and ICU length of stay (LOS)
- Rates of complications from AWS
- Adverse effects of gabapentin use

Author Contact Information: caroline.kruszecki@aah.org

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Conclusion

- Our pilot study evaluating gabapentin for AWS prophylaxis found no differences in progression to severe withdrawal, hospital LOS, need for rescue medications, BZD requirements, or adverse effects. Median ICU LOS was shorter among patients who received gabapentin.
- Gabapentin 300mg q 8H was the most commonly observed dosing regimen.
- Limitations: small sample size, retrospective design, combination of high and low risk patients
- Larger prospective studies evaluating gabapentin prophylaxis in high-risk patients are warranted. The lack of observed differences in our study may be attributed to the small sample size and the combination of low- and high-risk patients.

References:

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