

Adverse Effects

In the published clinical trials approximately 13% of patients withdrew from tizanidine treatment due to adverse effects. Those most frequently reported in association with tizanidine treatment included somnolence, dry mouth, dizziness, fatigue, gastrointestinal irritation and orthostatic hypotension. Also reported were insomnia, hallucinations and bradycardia.³⁻⁸

Increases in hepatic serum transaminases occasionally associated with serious liver dysfunction, have occurred in patients taking tizanidine. It is recommended that liver function tests are monitored monthly for at least the first four months of treatment and in those patients who with continuing therapy develop symptoms suggestive of liver dysfunction. The potential for increased hepatotoxicity with other drugs that adversely affect the liver is unknown.¹

Muscle weakness (an adverse effect often associated with baclofen and dantrolene) generally occurred in fewer patients receiving tizanidine than baclofen or diazepam. This difference was not however statistically significant.^{2,6-8}

Animal studies have suggested the QT interval may be prolonged with tizanidine. Caution should be exercised when tizanidine is prescribed with drugs known to increase the QT interval.¹

Costs

At current prices one year's treatment with tizanidine 6-36mg/day costs £656-2,456, compared with £49-198 for baclofen 20-80mg/day and £20-81 for diazepam 10-40mg/day. There are no data available on which to base a judgement on the cost-effectiveness of tizanidine.

Summary

Treatment with tizanidine has shown significant improvement in muscle tone over placebo, and comparable efficacy to baclofen and diazepam in patients with spasticity secondary to MS or with spinal cord injury or disease. Adverse effects reported with tizanidine include somnolence, dry mouth, hypotension and dizziness. Hepatic dysfunction, including hepatitis, has been reported in association with tizanidine and liver function tests, should be carefully monitored during drug treatment. Tizanidine therefore appears to offer an

alternative in the limited range of useful treatments for patients with cerebral or spinal spasticity.

References

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