

Depression with psychotic features induced by interferon-alpha treatment For hepatitis-c in a polydrug abuser: a case report

Ö.Ayhan Kalyoncu, Devran Tan, Hasan Mirsal, Özkan Pektaş, Mansur Beyazyürek

Maltepe Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Psikiyatri Anabilim Dalı, İstanbul

Comorbid psychiatric and somatic problems with drug abuse and its treatment have been well described. The prevalence of infectious diseases especially Hepatitis-C is common in drug abusers. The rate of Hepatitis-C was found to be %44,9 in our series of 107 intravenous heroin users. Interferon alpha (IFN) is the first choice pharmacological agent in the treatment for hepatitis C. Recipients of IFN-a treatment have various side-effects, including gastrointestinal, respiratory, dermatologic, hematologic and psychiatric symptoms such as development of depression, mania, increased irritability, changes in personality, hallucinations or delirium. Patients having risk factors like receiving high doses of IFN-a, having alcohol or substance use disorders and prior neurologic or psychiatric history might experience more psychiatric side-effects. On the other hand, the treatment with IFN-a is contraindicated because further intravenous drug abuse may lead to re-infection in drug abuser. This case is reported to raise awareness of psychiatric side effects of IFN-a treatment in high risk group of patients such as drug abusers with Hepatitis-C. A case of 29-year-old patient with chronic non-active hepatitis C and previous psychiatric history as polydrug abuse with use of cannabis, biperiden and rarely heroin, and anxiety disorder was reported. Two weeks after initiation of treatment with IFN-a, he developed tiredness, decrease in sleep and persecutory delusions. On psychiatric assessment, depression with psychotic features as persecutory, reference, paranoid delusions and irritability were apparent at two months of the treatment. The patient responded partially to discontinuation of interferon treatment. This is the first case report of depression with psychotic features in a 'high risk patient'. More studies which might explain early and late mechanisms of psychiatric disorders in patients with drug abuse and hepatitis C and might suggest safer treatments are needed.

Keywords : interferon-alpha, drug abuse, depression, hepatitis C