Prescribing practices of adjunctive anticonvulsants in alcohol withdrawal syndrome and the treatment of alcohol use disorder in older adults: a chart review

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BACKGROUND

Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome (AWS):
- AWS in seniors may lead to more medical complications compared to younger adults. (1)
- Protracted treatment for AUD with AWS is more common in seniors. (2)
- Anticonvulsants (AC) may be used as adjunctive medications, in hopes of decreasing AWS symptoms, duration, and seizure risk, especially at higher doses. (3)

Protracted Treatment for Alcohol use disorder (AUD):
- Admission to hospital for AWS may be a point of contact for AUD treatment using disulfiram, naltrexone, and acamprosate.

METHODS

- Design: Retrospective chart review.
- Inclusion criteria: age 60 and above; admitted to inpatient medicine units; alcohol-related diagnosis; completed the CIWA-Ar withdrawal protocol.
- Exclusion criteria: those already on AC or benzodiazepine; liver enzymes >5x the upper limit of normal; clonidine co-prescribed.
- Descriptive statistics, t-tests, chi-squared tests, multi-factor regression analysis.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1. Summary of Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age, mean ± SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male, N(%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard drinks per day, median (IQR1, IQR3)</td>
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<td>Prior AWS hospitalizations, N(%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior and severe AWS complications, N(%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cumulative Benzodiazepine dose (mg), means±SEM (severity factor not included)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cumulative Benzodiazepine dose (mg), mean ± SEM (severity included)</td>
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<td>Total duration of treatment (hours), mean ± SEM</td>
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CONCLUSION

- AC's are more often prescribed to those with repeated AWS hospitalizations and severe complications of AWS, but did not lessen duration of treatment nor amount of benzodiazepine administered.
- Our findings do not support the routine use of ACs in AUD treatment for hospitalized adults aged 60 and above.
- Few protracted treatments were prescribed on discharge, despite possible reduction of readmission, cost reduction, and alcohol-related harms. This is a missed opportunity for an alcohol-related admission.
- Need for improvement for VGH's CIWA-Ar protocol response.

REFERENCES