

Key Words: panic disorder, anxiety, treatment, medication, clonazepam

Long-Term Experience with Clonazepam in Patients with a Primary Diagnosis of Panic Disorder

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ABSTRACT ~ This study examined the patterns of use and efficacy of the high potency benzodiazepine (HPB) clonazepam in patients with panic disorder who were treated and followed naturalistically in the Massachusetts General Hospital Longitudinal Study of Panic Disorder. Of 204 patients followed over a 2-year period, 46% were receiving clonazepam alone or in combination with an antidepressant. Treatment was not controlled at initial evaluation or during the follow-up period. The main variables assessed in the analysis included global severity of the panic disorder and stability of clonazepam dose. All treatment groups improved over time without significant differences in outcome between groups. Clonazepam doses remained stable over time. Results of this study suggest that treatment of panic disorder with HPB clonazepam achieved and maintained a therapeutic benefit similar to that obtained with alternative pharmacological treatments, without the development of tolerance as manifested by dose escalation or worsening of clinical status. *Psychopharmacology Bulletin*. 1998;34(2):199-205.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Epidemiologic Catchment Area study, the lifetime prevalence of panic disorder is approximately 3.5%.¹ Pharmacotherapy of panic disorder typically yields an acute response, with about 50% to 70% of patients being rated as much or very much improved.² Follow-up studies of treatment with antidepressants or high potency benzodiazepines (HPB) suggest that many patients, though improved with treatment, remain at least somewhat symptomatic, and rates of relapse with discontinuation are relatively high. For example, in a follow-up study

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