COMPARING LOFEXIDINE WITH DIAZEPAM IN INPATIENT OPIATE DETOXIFICATION USING THE OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE OPIOID WITHDRAWAL SCALES

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Introduction: Singapore adopts a zero-tolerance policy towards substance use; opioid assisted detoxification is not practised. The study aimed to evaluate a more effective and non-addictive alternative to the currently used Diazepam in managing opiate withdrawal symptoms in Singapore. Objective Opioid Withdrawal Scale (OOWS) and Subjective Opioid Withdrawal Scale (SOWS) were used as the main study endpoints. This was the first double-blind randomized controlled trial worldwide that compared Lofexidine with Diazepam in the management of opioid withdrawal symptoms.

Method: Randomised subjects received either Lofexidine or Diazepam for up to 10 days, followed by 4 days of psychosocial intervention. Daily OOWS and SOWS were measured by a study researcher throughout the study period. The primary efficacy analysis was done using the “Intention to treat” dataset.

Results: Total 111 subjects were randomised; 56 to Lofexidine and 55 to Diazepam. Lofexidine subjects showed lower OOWS and SOWS scores throughout the 14-day study but the differences were not statistically significant. In both treatment groups the OOWS and SOWS scores peaked on Day 2.

Discussion and Conclusion: Lofexidine subjects experienced less severe withdrawal symptoms, compared to Diazepam. The lack of statistically significant differences could be due to an over-estimation of the treatment effect size of Lofexidine during sample size calculation which was based on preceding research reports elsewhere. The clinically significant finding will be further evaluated with other measures to decide on the use of Lofexidine in Singapore.

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