

Escitalopram (Lexapro) minimally effective for generalized anxiety disorder in older adults

Clinical Question:

Is escitalopram useful in the treatment of generalized anxiety disorder in adults 60 years or older?

Bottom Line:

This study found minimal, if any, evidence to support the use of escitalopram (Lexapro) for the treatment of generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) in older adults. ([LOE = 1b-](#))

Reference:

[Lenze EJ, Rollman BL, Shear MK, et al. Escitalopram for older adults with generalized anxiety disorder. A randomized controlled trial. JAMA 2009;301\(3\):295-303.](#)

Study Design:

Randomized controlled trial (double-blinded)

Funding:

Industry + govt

Setting:

Outpatient (any)

Allocation:

Concealed

Synopsis:

These investigators enrolled 177 adults, 60 years or older, who met standard criteria (DSM-IV) for GAD. Eligible patients randomly received (concealed allocation assignment) escitalopram 10 mg daily or matched placebo. The dosage was increased to 2 pills daily for patients who did not clinically respond after 4 weeks. Individuals masked to treatment group assignment assessed outcomes using the Clinical Global Impressions-Improvement scale, consisting of ratings for anxiety and perceived degree of improvement using both patient self-report and ratings from study personnel. Complete follow-up occurred for 80% of patients at 12 weeks. Using modified intention-to-treat analysis (including only patients who completed at least one follow-up evaluation), the predetermined clinically significant response rate was significantly higher in the escitalopram group than in the placebo group (60% vs 45%;

number needed to treat = 7). However, analysis using a true intention-to-treat design, which assumed that all patients who dropped out were nonresponders, found no significant differences between the 2 treatment groups. Fatigue was reported as an adverse side effect more often by patients taking escitalopram, but drop-out rates were similar in both groups.

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