



Center for Behavioral Health Studies



Topiramate Shows Promise in Cocaine Addiction

Topiramate, a medication currently used to treat seizure disorders, has helped cocaine addicted patients stay off the drug for 3 weeks or more. For those patients who can avoid relapse to cocaine for 3 to 4 weeks following treatment, there is a very good chance of continuing sobriety. **In related clinical trials, topiramate has helped prevent relapse to alcohol and opiate addiction.**

Study Outline

In a recent National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) research study, 40 crack cocaine smoking patients, mostly African American males, were treated over a 13 week period.

All participants met the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) criteria for cocaine dependence. Patients studied were typical of the chronic, relapsing abusers seeking treatment. They had abused cocaine an average of 10 years, preferring crack to the powder form. All of the men and women had demonstrated an average level of drug related social and health problems.

These participants' abuse was considered atypical in one way; they were all considered on the milder end of the addiction severity spectrum.

Participants were measured by the cocaine withdrawal symptom severity index, including days of abuse and money spent on cocaine.

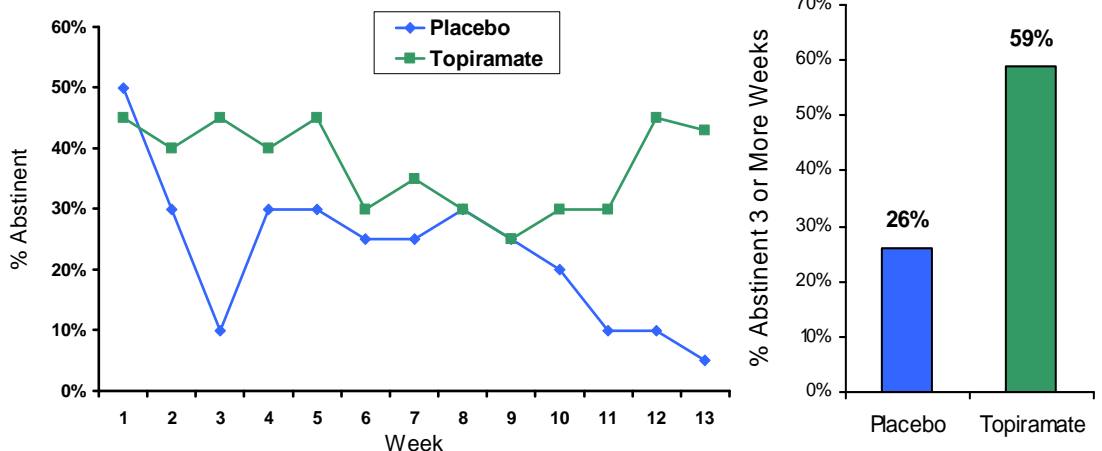
On average, participants were abusing cocaine every 6 to 8 days and were spending between \$300 to \$500 on the drug in the month before treatment. About 40 percent of patients treated experienced relatively mild withdrawal symptoms.

After a one week baseline period, the research team gave topiramate to 20 study participants, while the other 20 received a placebo.

Early findings have shown this medication's effectiveness as a treatment for alcohol and opiate addiction. **"Topiramate appears to have great potential as a relapse prevention medication,"** reports Mona Sumner, Clinical Director of Rimrock Foundation.

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In almost every week of the study; more patients were abstinent in the topiramate group than in the placebo group. Of the 40 participants in the study; more patients taking topiramate achieved 3 or more continuous weeks of abstinence from cocaine.

Summary

All addictive drugs deliver pleasurable effects by enhancing the dopamine neuro-transmitter in the reward and motivation pathways of the brain.

Topiramate seems to change the brain's response to cocaine by indirectly influencing dopamine through other neurotransmitters.

"This medication has shown potential as a treatment for a range of problems, includ-

ing addiction and some impulse control disorders," says Sumner. Since this drug does both simultaneously, it has a unique dual action that appears to underlie its promise as a relapse prevention medication.

These positive treatment results with cocaine addictions add to hopes that Topiramate may prove a versatile treatment medication for a variety of other drugs of abuse.

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