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Quality of Life and Self-Assessed Health of Methadone – Maintained Opiate Addicts

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Abstract : Introduction: Research in opiate addiction is increasingly indicating the importance of substitution therapy in opiate addicts. Opiate addiction is a chronic relapsing disease that includes craving as a criterion. Craving has been considered a predictor of a relapse, which is defined as a strong desire with an excessive need to take a substance. The study aimed to measure the intensity of craving using the VAS (visual analog scale) in opioid addicts taking the Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST). Method: The total sample compromised of 30 participants in outpatient treatment. Two groups of opiate addicts were considered: Methadone-maintenance and buprenorphine-maintenance addicts. The participants completed the survey questionnaire during the outpatient treatment. Results: The results indicated high levels of cravings in patients during the treatment on OST, which is considered an important destabilization factor in abstinence. Thus, the use of methadone/buprenorphine dose should be considered. Conclusion: These findings provided an objective measurement of methadone /buprenorphine dosage and therapy options. The underdoes of OST can put patients at high risk of relapse, resulting in high levels of craving. Thus, when determining the therapeutic dose of OST, it is crucial to consider patients´ craving. This would achieve stabilization more quickly and avoid relapse in abstinence. Subjective physician assessment and patient's statement are the main criteria to determine OST dosage. Future studies should use larger sample sizes and focus on the importance of intensity craving measurement on OST to objectify methadone /buprenorphine dosage.

Keywords : abstinence, addicts, methadone, OST, quality of life
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