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HEPATITIS C, INSOMNIA AND MIRTAZAPIN

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Objectives: Hepatitis C, a viral infection, is one of the most important causes of the chronic liver disease. As a consequence of interferon alpha 2a treatment of chronic hepatitis C, there is a number of side effects: headache, muscle aches, exhaustion, weight loss, hair loss, irritability, insomnia and other.

Aim: The aim of this study was to establish the frequency and the level of insomnia in patients with chronic hepatitis C that were treated with Interferon and Ribavirin for 24 weeks. We also evaluated the efficacy of Mirtazapin in the treatment of insomnia, in these patients.

Method: 30 patients in all, with serologically and pathohistologically established diagnosis of hepatitis C, were included in this study. These patients were treated with 180mg of Pegasus interferon injected subcutaneously, once a week. They also received 800mg of Ribavirin perorally a day. This treatment lasted 24 weeks.

PITTSBURGH SLEEP QUALITY INDEX-PSQI was used as a measuring instrument for the evaluation of the level of insomnia. All the patients tested were at the beginning of the Interferon treatment, and after 3, 5, and 7 months of treatment. Patients with diagnosed severe sleeping disorders were given small doses of Mirtazapin-15 mg every evening for 6 weeks.

Results: On the initial rounds, two patients had a PSQI score higher than 5. After a three month long Interferon treatment, five patients had a PSQI score higher than 5. After 7 months from the beginning of interferon treatment, ten patients had a PSQI score higher than 5, which indicates a significant sleeping disorder.

Conclusion: The administration of small doses of Mirtazapin/15 mg every evening shows useful effects in reduction of sleeping disorders caused by the Pegasus interferon treatment in patients suffering from chronic hepatitis C.