

Case Report of Propoxyphene Hydrochloride Abuse

By : A. A. El-Gaaly

ABSTRACT

A case of propoxyphene dependence was described. For four years the patient has taken the drug at an average daily dose of 900 mg by injection.

Treatment and withdrawal of the drug was achieved four times at specialised centers. However, this has always been followed by relapse. The drug produced marked tissue damage and deep abscesses at the injection sites.

There are several cases of propoxyphene dependence in Saudi Arabia. It is recommended that the drug should not be available without prescription.

INTRODUCTION

Dextropropoxyphene hydrochloride is a well known synthetic non-antipyretic orally effective analgesic compound which was introduced into therapeutics as a substitute for Codeine in 1957 (Elson and Domino, 1963).

Most drugs which relieve pain or exert a sedative effect on C.N.S. are subject to abuse, even though they do not cause rapid tolerance development or withdrawal symptoms. Propoxyphene hydrochloride appears to occupy an intermediate position between this group and the narcotic drug proper (Claghorn and Schoolar, 1966). Its addictive liability is low but several reports have demonstrated its abuse potential (Miller et al., 1970). The evidence in the literature suggests a

preponderance of psychic dependence on propoxyphene (Salguero et al., 1969; Kane and Norton, 1970). Large oral doses (300-600 mg) produce subjective effects that are considered pleasurable by post addicts. Administered intravenously, it is recognized as opioid by them. However, the drug is quite irritating when administered intravenously or subcutaneously, ~~and that abuse of these routes~~ results in severe damage to soft tissues and veins (Gilman and Goodman, 1980).

High doses of the drug produce toxic psychosis and convulsions. This limits its abuse potential (Jasinski et al., 1977). Some patients who consumed 1 gm died.

Combinations of excessive doses of propoxyphene, alcohol and tranquillizers may be dangerous (FDA, 1979).

There have been several cases of propoxyphene abuse and dependence in Saudi Arabia. Most of these patients developed severe tissue damage and abscesses at the sites of injection. In Saudi Arabia, drugs are available without prescription except those on the controlled list.

THE PRESENTED CASE

A 29 year old married man abused propoxyphene (Algaphan) by injection for about 4 years. Initially, he was prescribed the drug for abdominal pains that were attributed to irritable colon syndrome.

The patient was admitted 4 times for withdrawal and treatment of propoxyphene dependence at Centers abroad. Each time, discontinuation of the drug was achieved easily, but he returned to the habit 1-3 months following his discharge. He injects himself with an average of 12 ampoules per day (900 mg propoxyphene). He was treated for severe abscesses, cellulitis and marked tissue damage that developed at the sites of injections.

Three times he developed grand mal seizures when he exceeded his average abuse dose of propoxyphene. On one occasion, he had a car accident after he developed a seizure while driving, resulting in minor injuries and damage to the vehicles involved.

COMMENT

The patient used the drug for its euphoric effect. It enhances his mood and self image (Martin et al., 1973). Discontinuation is followed by anxiety symptoms, mild diarrhoea and inability to cope with ordinary life situations. The patient showed marked craving for the drug.

It is recommended that the drug should not be available without prescription and it should only be prescribed when it is clearly indicated.

REFERENCES

- Claghorn, J.L. and Scholard, J.C. (1966) Propoxyphene hydrochloride: A drug of abuse. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 196 : 1089—1091.
- Elson, A. and Domino, E.F. (1963) Dextropropoxyphene addiction. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 183 : 482—485.
- FDA (1979) New Warning on Propoxyphene. *Food and Drug Administrative Bulletin*, 9 : 22—23.
- Goodman and Gilman (1980) *The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics*. New York : McMillan publishing Co., Inc.
- Jasinski, D.R., Pevinck, J.S., Clark, S.C. and Griffith, J.D. (1977) Therapeutic usefulness of propoxyphene napsylate in narcotic addiction. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 34 : 227 — 233.
- Kane, F.J. and Norton, J.L. (1970) Addiction to propoxyphene. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 211 : 300.
- Martin, W.R., Jasinski, D.R., Haettzen, C.A. et al. (1973) Methadone: A reevaluation. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 28 : 286 — 295.

Miller, R.R., Feingold, A. and Paxinos, J. (1970) Propoxyphene hydrochloride : A critical review. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 213 : 996—1006.

Salguero, C.H., Villarreal, J.E., Hug, C.C. et al. (1969) Propoxyphene dependence. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 210 : 135—136.

الموجز

تقرير عن حالة سوء استخدام مادة البروبوكسين هيدروكلوريد

وصفت حالة اعتماد على مادة البروبوكسين حيث كان المريض يتعاطى العقار لمدة أربعة أعوام بجرعة متوسطة اليومى ٩٠٠ مجم عن طريق الحقن .

وقد تم العلاج وسحب العقار أربع مرات في مراكز متخصصة وفي كل مرة حدثت انتكاسة . وقد تسبب العقار في أحداث تلف ملحوظ بالأنسجة وخرابيج عميقة في مكان الحقن .

وتوجد حالات تعود على عقار البروبوكسين بكثرة في المملكة العربية السعودية ، وننصح بالآلا يصرف العقار دون نصيحة الطبيب .

ABSTRAIT

Rapport d'un Cas d'Abus d'Hydrochloride de Propoxyphène

Ceci est une description d'un cas de toxicomanie utilisant le propoxyphène. Cette drogue a été utilisée par le malade pour une durée de 4 ans avec une dose journalière moyenne de 900 mg par injection.

Ce malade a subi une desintoxication et un traitement quatre fois auparavant dans des centre specialisés. Cependant, ces cures étaient toujours suivit par une réintoxication. Ce médicament avait produit des lésions locales importantes ainsi que des abcés profonds aux endroits des injections.

Il y a plusieurs cas de toxicomanie au propoxyphène en Arabie Séoudite. Il est à conseiller que ce médicament devrait être procuré seulement sur prescription médicale.