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BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

November 2021

What is lamotrigine?

Lamotrigine is an anticonvulsant used primarily in the treatment of epilepsy. Anticonvulsant medications influence the actions of neurotransmitters leading to a decrease in brain cell (neuron) excitability. In bipolar disorder, lamotrigine is used mainly for the treatment of depression.

What is the evidence for lamotrigine as a treatment for bipolar disorder?

Compared to placebo, high quality evidence finds a small effect of fewer relapses with lamotrigine to any mood state in stable patients. Moderate to high quality evidence suggests a small effect of greater improvement in depression symptoms, but not mania symptoms, with mono or adjunctive lamotrigine, and no differences in adverse events, including switching to mania.

Compared to other medications, moderate to high quality evidence suggests lamotrigine was less effective than tamoxefin, risperidone, haloperidol or olanzapine for acute mania symptoms. Moderate to low quality evidence suggests fewer relapses with quetiapine than with lamotrigine, but lamotrigine was better tolerated than carbamazepine or lithium + valproate. There was more discontinuation with lamotrigine than with olanzapine, and more switching to mania with lamotrigine than with quetiapine or ziprasidone.

Moderate quality evidence suggests the rate of adverse dermatological reaction with lamotrigine is around 8.6%, with rates of Stevens-Johnson syndrome/ toxic epidermal necrolysis in particular being around 0.02%.

There were no differences in symptoms or adverse events when lamotrigine was compared to lithium, olanzapine + fluoxetine, trancylpromine, citalopram, or inositol.

For more information see the technical table

NeuRA
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NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about bipolar disorder or its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

We are able to make significant advances due to the generosity of countless people. Your donation allows us to continue to work towards transforming lives. For information on how you can support our research, phone **1300 888 019** or make a secure donation at **neura.edu.au**.

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