

Abstract

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Acetyl-L-Carnitine for Alcohol Craving and Relapse Prevention in Anhedonic Alcoholics: A Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Pilot Trial.

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AIM: The study aimed to evaluate the efficacy of acetyl-L-carnitine (ALC), at different doses, in relapse prevention and craving in anhedonic detoxified alcohol-dependent subjects.

METHOD: Randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, pilot study in 64 alcohol-dependent anhedonic patients: 23 received ALC at a dose of 3 g/day, 21 received ALC at a dosage of 1 g/day and 20 were given placebo. Intensity of alcohol craving was evaluated by Visual Analogue Scale. Subjects were evaluated at the beginning of treatment and after 10, 30, 60 and 90 days.

RESULTS: Survival analysis showed that patients treated with ALC remained completely abstinent for longer than those treated with placebo ($Z = -2.27$; $P < 0.05$). From the 10th day onwards, a greater reduction of craving was observed in the ALC 1 g group than with placebo ($P = 0.035$). The two groups did not differ in the percentage of subjects remaining abstinent for the entire study period or the number of subjects who relapsed (defined as five or more standard drinks (four for women) on a single occasion or drinking on five or more days in 1 week).

CONCLUSIONS: The results of this study suggest that ALC can reduce craving and the time to first drink. ALC use was safe. Further studies are needed to clarify to confirm, over longer periods, these short-term outcome benefits.

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