

Abstract

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Psychological burden in the era of HAART: impact of selenium therapy.

Shor-Posner G, Lecusay R, Miguez MJ, Moreno-Black G, Zhang G, Rodriguez N, Burbano X, Baum M, Wilkie F.

University of Miami School of Medicine, USA.

OBJECTIVE: To determine the impact of nutritional (selenium) chemoprevention on levels of psychological burden (anxiety, depression, and mood state) in HIV/AIDS.

METHOD: A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled selenium therapy (200 microg/day) trial was conducted in HIV+ drug users from 1998-2000. Psychosocial measures (STAI-State and Trait anxiety, BDI-depression, and POMS- mood state), clinical status (CD4 cell count, viral load), and plasma selenium levels were determined at baseline and compared with measurements obtained at the 12-month evaluation in 63 participants (32 men, 31 women).

RESULTS: The majority of the study participants reported elevated levels of both State (68%) and Trait (70%) anxiety. Approximately 25% reported overall mood distress (POMS > 60) and moderate depression (BDI > 20). Psychological burden was not influenced by current drug use, antiretroviral treatment, or viral load. At the 12-month evaluation, participants who received selenium reported increased vigor ($p = 0.004$) and had less anxiety (State, $p = 0.05$ and Trait, $p = 0.02$), compared to the placebo-treated individuals. No apparent selenium-related affect on depression or distress was observed. The risk for state anxiety was almost four times higher, and nearly nine times greater for trait anxiety in the placebo-treated group, controlling for antiretroviral therapy, CD4 cell decline (> 50 cells) and years of education.

CONCLUSIONS: Selenium therapy may be a beneficial treatment to decrease anxiety in HIV+ drug users who exhibit a high prevalence of psychological burden.

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