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NEWSLETTER



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***Methadonia* : Can Methadone and Benzodiazapines be used together?**

The FDA approved methadone in 1947 for chronic pain. However, it is more commonly seen as a medication that is given to heroin addicts to prevent withdrawal symptoms and expedite recovery from opiate addiction.

Michael Negroponte, a documentary filmmaker, followed a group of people using methadone for their heroin addiction at the New York Center for Addiction Treatment Services (N.Y.C.A.T.S.). His film, *Methadonia* explores the idea that methadone and benzodiazapines have a cumulative euphoric effect on the user and that this addiction could be stronger than that of heroin.

Clarification between the terms narcotics and opioids is important. Opioids describe a pharmacologic class of analgesic medications based upon receptor affinity. Narcotics refer to any class of medications in which addiction and misuse may become apparent. All opioid medications are considered narcotics by regulatory agencies, however, some non-opioid medications (Eg. cocaine) are also considered narcotics. All opioid medications can foster

dependency, meaning that a person will experience withdrawal symptoms if cessation from higher doses of opioids is abrupt.

Benzodiazapines can be part of a multifaceted therapeutic regimen, especially if a chronic pain patient also experiences anxiety. We believe additional caution should be exercised if prescribing both methadone and benzodiazapines. It is also important that one physician be in charge of prescribing both medications and monitoring treatment outcomes via monthly office visits. Methadone can be prescribed by our practice for neuropathic, chronic pain that is often refractory to other narcotics. It is not usually used as a first line pain medication secondary to the preconception by many patients that methadone is used only for heroin detoxification purposes. Benzodiazapines also can be very beneficial in reducing anxiety for patients. The patient needs to be instructed that these medications alone or together could be addictive if misused.

Methadonia focuses on recovering heroin addicts who have now become addicted to different medications. Appropriate patient selection is essential prior to prescribing methadone or benzodiazapines to anyone, but when used properly can provide profound benefits and improvement of a patient's quality of life.

For Information and Referrals:

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