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Allergy to tartrazine in alprazolam**MS Bhatia**

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Allergic reactions to alprazolam are frequently the result of an allergy to the dyes to the drug rather than the active compound. The most frequently reported dye is tartrazine [1],[3] and the common symptoms of allergy are urticaria, bronchospasm, nonthrombocytopenic purpura and less frequently anaphylaxis, angioedema and rhinitis [4],[5] Tartrazine produces adverse reactions more frequently in people with known aspirin sensitivity. [2] Allergy to tartrazine and other dyes has been reported to occur in 0.01% to 0.6%, persons.

Material & Methods

The detailed history and physical examination of ten patients of allergic reactions associated with administration of tartrazine - containing alprazolam brands were recorded. All the patients were suffering from generalized anxiety disorder (3 patients also had panic attacks). The patients with a history of organic brain syndrome, functional psychosis, drugs abuse or intake of any other medication except alprazolam were excluded. The diagnosis of drug-induced allergic reaction was made from the confirmed history of intake of tartrazine - containing alprazolam, development of allergic reactions (pruritus and/or rash diagnosed with the help of a dermatologist), stoppage of tartrazine-containing brands, disappearance of allergic reactions. These patients were then shifted (after a 2weeks gap) to non-tartrazine containing alprazolam brands. The number of patients prescribed alprazolam (containing tartrazine) during the study period were also recorded.

Results

Twenty (female 14, male 6; age 23-45 year; known allergy to other drugs 4) of the 960 patients (2.1%) exposed to tartrazine containing alprazolam brands developed urticaria. The common allergic reactions were pruritus and rash, appeared within one week of prescription. The allergic symptoms subsided within 24-48 hours on stoppage of the offending brand. Four patients were also prescribed antihistaminics for one week. All the patients were prescribed non-tartrazine containing alprazolam brands after two-weeks period. None of the patients developed the allergic reactions again.

Discussion

Since allergic reactions occurred in patients taking tartrazine-containing alprazolam brands but not to other brands, allergy to tartrazine appears to be the most likely explanation in these cases. Allergic reactions to tartrazine and other dyes have been reported to occur in 0.6%, [6] to as many as 2.9% persons [3] but in the present series. 2.1% persons taking tartrazine-containing alprazolam brands developed allergic reactions. History of allergy to tartrazine containing imipramine was present in only one patient. Allergic reactions to tartrazine have been reported more frequently in people with aspirin sensitivity [1] but in the present series, there was only one person who gave a history of aspirin sensitivity. Tartrazine-induced allergy should be kept in mind in clinical practice. Since most of the drug companies often mention tartrazine as an additive in their package inserts, the patients with known history of allergy to tartrazine-containing alprazolam or tricyclic antidepressants should not be prescribed these brands.

Summary

Allergy to tartrazine-containing, psychotropic medication (especially antidepressants) had been reported. 20 patients of apparent allergy to tartrazine - containing alprazolam brands in 480 patients exposed to the dye are described. Rechallenge with non tartrazine-containing alprazolam brands did not produce the similar allergic reactions

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