

Protocol for Antidepressant Drug Withdrawal supported by Homeopathy

This compassionate and wise protocol has been written with particular reference to a patient who tried to withdraw from Ativan on her own before being properly supported through it with homeopathy. It should also apply to other benzodiazepines and probably SSRI antidepressant drugs.

You are welcome to share it with anyone who might find it useful but it should only be prescribed by a qualified homeopath who understands the prescribing procedure and who can also offer understanding and emotional support.

The whole process takes about 9 months with homeopathic appointments at least once a month.

The protocol was demonstrated at a weekly postgraduate clinic run by the late Kenneth Metson in 1995. At first it was shocking to see how many homeopathic pills were prescribed but, as Ken pointed out, these patients are used to and very dependent on the daily process of taking drugs. It takes enormous willpower for them to come off them and, without a lot of support, they can easily relapse and have to start all over again.

In following this protocol there is a slight risk that the homeopathic remedies give the patient such a sense of confidence and well-being that they go too fast with their withdrawal. Hence the importance of reminding them to go slowly and also for using Sac Lac when necessary.

In an ideal world you will be able to work with the patient's GP.

Ativan = Lorazepam, prescribed for short-term treatment of anxiety or insomnia. However, some patients become dependent on it for years and find it impossible to stop.

NBWS Ativan: Consider **Ativan 30** bd for a few days (or other appropriate potentised pharmaceutical drug) at some point.

Dose reduction:

Reduce by a quarter tablet at a time.

If 3 tablets are taken per day reduce each one by a quarter.

But if the patient is very dependent on the drug start by reducing only the lunchtime dose by a quarter. Follow that reduction with the night dose then the morning one.

The smallest prescribable Ativan tablet is 1mg and patients may have difficulty cutting it into halves and quarters.

The patient could ask their doctor to ask the pharmacist to dispense the drug as a liquid dose or cut them with a tablet cutter. A similar procedure could be very good

for SSRI's (Selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors like Prozac and Seroxat) and take 6 months. Dr Stephen Gascoigne's 'The Prescribed Drug Guide - A Holistic Perspective' is very good for drug information and protocols. (Brenda Pretty, pharmacist and registered homeopath).

Take at least a month for each quarter-dose reduction.

i.e. reduce daily dose by one quarter per month.

Substitute the reduced quarter with either **Kali Phos 30** or **Gels 30** and take the selected remedy at the same time as the reduced dose.

These two remedies are complementary; they can be given on alternate weeks or prn especially for shakes.

Kali Phos - 'Everything is an effort'

Gelsemium - Shakes

Also give the constitutional or indicated remedy daily or when appropriate.

e.g. **Lach 30** or **Ars Alb 30 prn**.

Periodically, or especially to help finish withdrawal, give **Sac Lac** prn and/or **Ativan 30** (or appropriate drug in potency).

N.B.

If suppressed mental symptoms like resentment appear during withdrawal do NOT give **Nat Mur** in high potency. Try not to give it at all at this stage. **Nat Mur** might bring up more distress from the past than the patient can cope with at this time. Try Bach Flower remedies instead, like **White Chestnut**.

If the patient is too hurried slow them down with Bach **Impatiens** or possibly **Lachesis**.

During the final stage of withdrawal

If the patient is taking Ativan tds suggest they drop the mid-day dose first, then the night one.

Leave the morning dose till last "so they have something to wake up for".

Other helpful information:

Helpline: Council for Information on Tranquillisers and Antidepressants
0151 932 0102

Website: www.benzo.org.uk especially for the Ashton Manual 2011 supplement

Revised January 2012 by Jane Hurley
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