

Ketamine for fast alleviation of acute depression

Ketamine seems to be one more addition to the armamentarium of antipsychotics/antidepressants, which can possibly painlessly bring the potential suiciders away from the jaws of death.

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NEWS

Bolus dose of ketamine offers fast-acting alleviation of acute depression in emergency department (ED) setting.^[1]

(RE)VIEWS

Medications (along with ECT, when specifically indicated) are the mainstays of treatment for severe major depressive disorder. It is a well-established fact that current medication treatments for depressive disorders require weeks of therapy for a significant clinical response.^[2] Further, although the efficacy of antidepressants in acute bipolar depression is undisputed, there are major concerns about the risk of switch to mania.^[3]

Therefore what to do to for patients presenting with acute depression with suicidal ideation, to rapidly alleviate depression and suicidal thoughts, in the background of nonavailability of good pharmacotherapy?

A single subanesthetic dose of intravenous ketamine (0.20 mg/kg over 1–2 min) administered to acutely depressed and suicidal patients presenting to the ED has been shown to rapidly alleviate depression and suicidal thoughts for up to 10 days. This study was presented at the American College of Emergency Physicians 2010 Scientific Assembly. Suicidal ideation was completely resolved in 14 of the 15 subjects within 40 min, and was sustained at a 10-day follow-up in 13 of the 14 patients.^[4]

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