

Combination pharmacotherapy in alcoholism: a novel treatment approach.

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Abstract

Combination pharmacotherapy has proven effective in a number of psychiatric disorders, including depression and schizophrenia. However, compared with other affective disorders, few studies have explored the use of combination therapy in alcoholism, and the majority have been limited to animal models. There is evidence to support a role for combination therapy in alcoholism. For example, several neurochemical systems, including the dopaminergic, serotonergic, and opioidergic, appear to affect alcohol intake. Studies in several different types of alcohol-preferring rats have suggested that coadministration of agents to target more than one of these systems simultaneously may produce beneficial effects on alcohol intake, while avoiding problematic effects, such as alterations in food or water intake. Data from preliminary clinical studies have shown trends toward combination therapy reducing alcohol intake in humans. While such findings are encouraging, they must be explored further in larger, randomized, double-blind trials.