

The Use of Herbal Adaptogens together with Tricyclic Antidepressants in Patients with Psychogenic Depressions

by

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in

*Modern Problems of Pharmacology
and Search for New Medicines,
V. 2, Tomsk, 1986, pp. 58-60*

A large number of cases and a variety of clinical symptoms of depressive states urgently call for the improvement in drug therapy of such patients. Most of the authors recognize good curability of psychogenic depressions, efficacy of combined use of psychotherapy with tranquilizers and antidepressants with mild effect. However, long psychotraumatic stress situations result in a tendency to lingering, resistant to psychopharmacological treatment development of the disease. The symptoms of endogenous depression appear. All this is an indication for more intensive treatment with antidepressants. The use of average and high doses of tricyclic antidepressants aggravates the patient's state, side effects appear (A. B. Smulevich, 1981; G. Ya. Avrutskij, A. A. Neduva, 1981). That's why the efforts of investigators should be directed not only to the search for new antidepressants, but to the development of methods increasing general non-specific resistance of the organism. Biologically active substances - adaptogens, having a protective effect under physical and mental stress, meet these requirements. In this aspect *Eleutherococcus* and *Rhodiola rosea* extracts became very popular in psychiatric practice (E. D. Krasik *et al.*, 1970; L. Ya. Shemetova, 1972; M. N. Mikhailova, 1983). Nevertheless there is practically no information on the use of these preparations for the treatment of depression in the literature. This was the reason why this study was conducted.

67 patients (19 males and 48 females) with psychogenic depressions at the age of 20-45 years were examined using clinical psychopathological procedure. All patients were divided into 2 groups according to the development of the disease: acute psychogenic depression (28 patients) and lingering psychogenic depression (39 patients). According to the clinical picture the following syndromes were observed: astheno-depressive (23 patients), anxiety-depressive (18), depressive-hypochondriac (13), hysteric-depressive (7), depressive-phobic (6). All patients took tricyclic antidepressants in an average dose up to 150 mg/day. From the very beginning herbal adaptogens were prescribed in a dose of 15-20 drops twice in the first half of the day. 46 patients took *Eleutherococcus* extract and 21 patients were treated with *Rhodiola rosea* extract. A group of 31 patients treated with antidepressants alone served as a control. This group was identical to the test group by age and clinical states.

Preliminary analysis of the results on combined use of adaptogens and tricyclic antidepressants showed that they had a positive effect on the psychopathological symptoms. Thus, reduction in affective, ideamotor and motor components of the depressive triad, increase in general activity and intellectual and physical productivity were observed under the effect of the products. Such unfavorable side effect of psychopharmacotherapy as constipation, sinus tachycardia, tremor in extremities and headache decreased considerably.

The most positive dynamics of the disease development was observed in patients with reactive depressions where anxiety-depressive and astheno-depressive symptoms dominated in the clinical picture and this did not depend on the acute or lingering form of the disease. The symptoms of anxiety, erethism and tension disappeared, the mood became normal much faster than in control subjects (30-36 days against 40-43 days in control). Combined use of tricyclic antidepressants and stimulants was effective in hypochondriacs only in case of acute psychogenic depression. In cases

with a lingering form of the disease depressive symptoms were reduced while hypochondriac complaints became dominant, urgent and required additional drugs. In cases with hysteric-depressive and depressive-phobic symptoms the use of herbal adaptogens always intensified hysteric and phobic disorders.

Therefore, the use of herbal adaptogens together with tricyclic antidepressants against psychogenic depressions is possible in cases with asthenia and anxiety symptoms. Hysteric and phobic disorders were intensified under the effect of this therapy. Hypochondriac symptoms were well arrested in acute cases. In general, depressive triad was reduced much faster and side effects of tricyclic antidepressants decreased under the action of *Eleutherococcus* extract and *Rhodiola rosea* extract.