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A PILOT DOUBLE-BLIND PLACEBO-CONTROLLED TRIAL USING DOXAZOSIN FOR ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE
G. Kenna1, C. Haass-Koffer1, R. Swift1, W. Zywiak1, M. Brickley1, S. Edwards2, and L. Leggio3
1Brown University, Providence, RI, 2Department of Psychology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE, and 3NIAAA/NIDA, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD

Background. Data suggests the norepinephrine system represents an important treatment target for alcohol dependence (AD) and the alpha-1 blocker prazosin may block dependence-induced increases in alcohol response. Doxazosin demonstrates a more manageable profile than prazosin but has never been studied for AD.

Method. A randomized double-blind placebo controlled trial was conducted in DSM-IV diagnosed AD individuals seeking treatment.

Doxazosin or placebo were titrated to 16-mg/day (or maximum tolerable dose). Drinks per week (DPW) and heavy drinking days (HDD) were primary outcomes; craving, anxiety and stress were secondary outcomes. Severity of AD, family history of alcoholism (FHA) and gender were a priori moderators.

Results. 41 individuals were randomized and 29 (doxazosin = 14) completed the study. There were no significant differences between groups in DPW and HDD per week, though there was non-significantly fewer DPW and HDD in the doxazosin group ($d = 0.23$ and $0.35$). With FHA as moderator there were main effects on DPW [$p = .007$] and HDD [$p = .008$] and significant FHA x medication interaction with large effect sizes for DPW [$p = .011; d = .73$] and HDD [$p = .003; d = .84$]. Similar significant results (with lower effect sizes) were found for severity of AD but not for gender.

Conclusion. Though this study does not support a general role of doxazosin in reducing alcohol use in AD individuals, results may suggest a possible role in selectively reducing alcohol drinking and craving in AD patients with a positive FHA and high severity of AD.