

Clozapine as a treatment for catatonia: a systematic review

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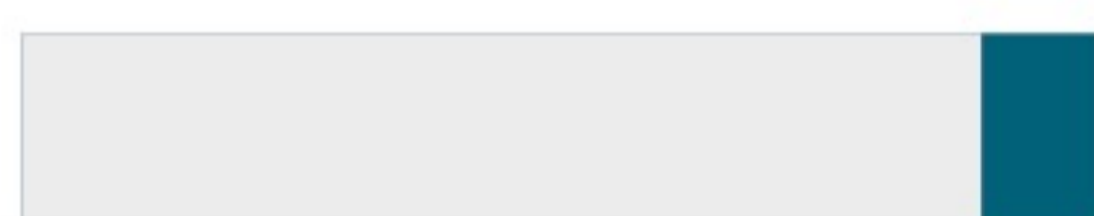
Introduction

- Catatonia is a neuropsychiatric disorder characterised by altered movement, speech, and behaviour.
- Clozapine is an established therapy for treatment-resistant schizophrenia, but its role in catatonia has not been systematically examined. In this review, we aimed to assess the evidence for clozapine as a treatment for catatonia.

Materials & Methods

- Full text original research articles in English where at least one patient with catatonia was treated with clozapine were included, provided catatonia did not occur solely in the context of neuroleptic malignant syndrome.
- Risk of bias was assessed with the Tool for Evaluating the Methodological Quality of Case Reports and Case Series. Overall, 25 studies were of low quality, 60 of moderate quality and 8 of high quality.

847 articles in database search



93 articles included
- 79 case reports
- 8 case series
- 6 cohort studies

Results

182 PATIENTS ACROSS ALL ARTICLES

65% had a specified underlying diagnosis of schizophrenia

82% at least partial remission following treatment with clozapine

81 PATIENTS IN COHORT STUDIES

101 PATIENTS IN CASE REPORTS/CASE SERIES

24% of catatonia diagnoses reported to follow clozapine withdrawal

61% of patients co-prescribed benzodiazepines alongside clozapine

References

1. Saini, A. *et al.* (2022) 'Clozapine as a treatment for catatonia: A systematic review', *Schizophrenia Research*. doi:10.1016/j.schres.2022.09.021.

Discussion

- Data from this study should be interpreted cautiously due to limitations concerning both data derived largely from case reports and case series and the quality of studies.
- However, this study does have implications for clinical practice. This is the first systematic review to specifically investigate clozapine usage to treat catatonia.
- Clozapine seems to be rarely associated with precipitating or worsening of catatonia and is an uncommon precipitant of NMS
- Unlike other treatment modalities, clozapine is typically used long-term, so it may particularly have a role where catatonia is chronic or frequently relapsing.

Conclusion and recommendations

- Consider a trial of clozapine for catatonia following failure or lack of availability of conventional treatments such as benzodiazepines or ECT
- Consider a trial of clozapine where clozapine withdrawal is a likely precipitant.
- Monitor both treatment response, ideally with a standardised rating scale and side effects carefully.
- Where clozapine is used for catatonia, a trial of at least 8 weeks should be conducted before it is concluded not to be effective.
- If clozapine is withdrawn from an individual who has previously had catatonia, it should be slowly withdrawn where safe to do so, due to the risk of clozapine-withdrawal catatonia.
- Consider reporting and enrolling patients treated with clozapine for catatonia in research studies and, where possible, use large healthcare databases to ascertain outcomes in those on clozapine with a history of catatonia