Zolpidem: distinct from triazolam?
Lobo B L, Greene W L

Authors' objectives
To compare the effectiveness and adverse effects of zolpidem with triazolam in the treatment of insomnia.

Searching
MEDLINE was searched from 1983 to 1996 for English language publications using the terms 'triazolam' and 'zolpidem'.

Study selection
Study designs of evaluations included in the review
Clinical trials were included.

Specific interventions included in the review
Zolpidem (5 to 20 mg/day) and triazolam (0.125 to 0.5 mg/day); both are short-acting sedative-hypnotics.

Participants included in the review
People with insomnia, including populations from general practice, psychiatric in–patients and outpatients, and the elderly.

Outcomes assessed in the review
Several outcomes were assessed: sleep-related outcomes such as sleep onset latency, duration and quality of sleep, number of nocturnal wakenings and nocturnal awake time; daytime residual effects; memory impairment; and other adverse effects such as dizziness, headaches and nausea.

How were decisions on the relevance of primary studies made?
The authors do not state how the papers were selected for the review, or how many of the authors performed the selection.

Assessment of study quality
The authors do not report the criteria used to assess quality, or how the quality assessment was performed.

Data extraction
The authors do not state how the data were extracted for the review, or how many of the authors performed the data extraction.

Methods of synthesis
How were the studies combined?
The studies were combined in a narrative review, with study details presented in tabular format.

How were differences between studies investigated?
The authors do not state how differences between the studies were investigated.

Results of the review
Four randomised, double-blind trials (n=832) comparing the effectiveness of zolpidem with triazolam on sleep outcomes, and 7 double-blind, placebo-controlled trials (n=211) comparing the effects of zolpidem with triazolam on
performance and memory.

Sleep outcomes: there were no differences between the two drugs in sleep-related outcomes.

Performance and memory: the greatest impairments were found with higher than recommended doses at the time of peak drug effect (1.5 hours after administration), but on awakening (6 to 8 hours after administration), residual effects had disappeared with both drugs. There were no reported differences in adverse effects, such as headaches, between the two drugs.

There remains uncertainty with both drugs in relation to abuse potential and rebound insomnia.

Authors' conclusions
Zolpidem and triazolam are similar in terms of effectiveness and tolerability when given at equipotent doses.

CRD commentary
Very little information is provided on the methods of this review. The search was limited to MEDLINE with the use of 'zolpidem' and 'triazolam' as search terms. No attempt was made to identify unpublished literature and the search was restricted to those studies published in the English language. Issues such as lack of power are mentioned in the review, although it is unclear if any quality criteria were used in assessing individual studies.

Bibliographic details

PubMedID
9161660

Indexing Status
Subject indexing assigned by NLM

MeSH
Humans; Hypnotics and Sedatives /adverse effects /pharmacokinetics /therapeutic use; Pyridines /adverse effects /pharmacokinetics /therapeutic use; Sleep Initiation and Maintenance Disorders /drug therapy /psychology; Triazolam /adverse effects /pharmacokinetics /therapeutic use

AccessionNumber
11997000668

Date bibliographic record published
28/02/1998

Date abstract record published
28/02/1998

Record Status
This is a critical abstract of a systematic review that meets the criteria for inclusion on DARE. Each critical abstract contains a brief summary of the review methods, results and conclusions followed by a detailed critical assessment on the reliability of the review and the conclusions drawn.