Psicofarmacos para o tratamento de transtornos de ansiedade em crianças e adolescentes: uma revisão sistemática [Pharmacotherapy for the treatment of anxiety disorders in children and adolescents: a systematic review]

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CRD summary
This review suggested that selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors were effective for the treatment of anxiety disorders in children and adolescents. Insignificant or unfavourable results were found for benzodiazepines and imipramine. Overall, this review appears to be reliable.

Authors' objectives
To evaluate the efficacy and safety of pharmacological treatments for children and adolescents with anxiety disorders.

Searching
The authors searched the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL; up to February 2006), MEDLINE (1966 to February 2006), LILACS (1980 to February 2006), SciELO (1987 to February 2006), and PsycINFO (1985 to 2006). The search terms were reported. They searched selected websites and sought ongoing studies through contact with study authors. They also checked the bibliographic references of all identified studies.

Study selection
To be eligible for the review, studies were double-blind placebo-controlled randomised trials. Participants had to have one of the following anxiety disorders, diagnosed according to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders criteria: generalised anxiety disorder, separation anxiety disorder, panic disorder, specific phobias, and social phobia. To be included, children were between 5 and 11 years of age and adolescents were between 12 and 17 years of age. The pharmacological interventions were benzodiazepines, antidepressants, and placebo. Review articles, non-drug trials, and trials not graded A or B by Cochrane quality criteria were excluded.

It was unclear how studies were selected for the review or how many reviewers performed the selection.

[A: Two reviewers were involved in the selection of the trials.]

Assessment of study quality
Study quality was assessed in terms of allocation concealment according to Cochrane criteria. Trials classified as A had clear, adequate allocation concealment, B trials had adequate concealment of allocation, but no detailed description, C trials had inadequate allocation concealment, and D trials were not randomised.

It was unclear how many reviewers participated in the quality assessment.

[A: Quality was assessed by two reviewers.]

Data extraction
The authors did not state how the data were extracted for the review or how many reviewers performed the data extraction.

Methods of synthesis
The authors conducted a narrative synthesis.

Results of the review
Twenty-six trials met the inclusion criteria, but only two were graded A and five were graded B, according to Cochrane criteria, and these were included in the review.
All four trials investigating selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs) found statistically significant effects compared with placebo on the Clinical Global Impression scales. One trial investigated tricyclic antidepressants; global improvement in the placebo group ranged from 25 to 67% and in the imipramine group ranged from 45 to 60%. In two trials of benzodiazepines, neither drug was found to be superior to placebo.

Selected safety data were presented in the report.

**Authors' conclusions**
The findings of the review suggested efficacy for SSRIs and insignificant or unfavourable results for benzodiazepines and imipramine. Methodological improvements were needed in future trials.

**CRD commentary**
This review had defined inclusion criteria for participants, interventions and study design, but not for outcomes. Searching encompassed a range of electronic databases and other sources. Validity was evaluated using published criteria to assess the studies for inclusion in the review. It was unclear if more than one reviewer was involved in the process of data extraction, which would minimise the potential for bias and error in this process.

Overall, this review appears to be reliable.

**Implications of the review for practice and research**
**Practice**: The authors stated that there was scope for the use of SSRIs in the treatment of anxiety disorders in children and adolescents, but they should be monitored carefully.

**Research**: The authors stated that well-planned studies, following Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials guidelines and registered in a database of clinical trials, should be conducted. Adverse effects should be assessed in a systematic way in future studies to improve safety.

**Funding**
No funding received.

**Bibliographic details**

**PubMedID**
17435933

**DOI**
10.1590/S1516-44462006005000019

**Original Paper URL**
http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&amp;pid=S1516-44462007000100018&amp;lng=en&amp;nrm=iso&amp;tlng=en

**Indexing Status**
Subject indexing assigned by NLM

**MeSH**
Adolescent; Anti-Anxiety Agents /therapeutic use; Antidepressive Agents /therapeutic use; Antidepressive Agents, Tricyclic /therapeutic use; Anxiety Disorders /drug therapy; Benzodiazepines /therapeutic use; Child; Double-Blind
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.