



Awakenings Mental Health

Propranolol

What is Propranolol and How Does it Work?

Propranolol is a beta-blocker medication used "off-label" to manage the physical symptoms of situational anxiety. It works by blocking adrenaline's effects on the body, calming reactions like a racing heart, trembling, and sweating. It specifically targets the body's stress response without altering mood or cognitive thought patterns.

The Link to Situational Anxiety

For predictable, high-stakes events like public speaking or performances, Propranolol helps manage the body's fight-or-flight reaction. A meta-analysis of studies confirmed that Propranolol significantly reduces these acute anxiety symptoms compared to a placebo, making it an effective tool for performance-related stress.

Uses & Benefits in Anxiety

The goal of using Propranolol is to prevent physical symptoms from interfering with performance.

Dampens Physical Symptoms:

Reduces palpitations, tremor, and sweating.

Improves Performance:

By controlling the body's reaction, it can help individuals feel more in control and focused during an anxiety-provoking event.

Dosage:

A typical dose is 20–40 mg taken about 60 minutes before the event.

Safety:

It is highly recommended to do a "trial run" in a low-stakes setting to assess your body's reaction. Use should always be supervised by a medical provider.

Important Note:

Unlike benzodiazepines, Propranolol is not habit-forming, but it requires a prescription and medical clearance due to its effects on heart rate and blood pressure.

Conclusion

For individuals needing to manage the intense physical symptoms of situational anxiety, Propranolol is an effective and non-addictive option. Proper medical guidance is essential to ensure it is used safely and appropriately.