

USE OF ARIPIPRAZOLE IN HYPERPROLACTINEMIA



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# 'PARTH VIROJA, 'TANVIR IQBAL, 'SHAHID HUSSAIN, 'DANIEL GRIMES

'' MD PGY-1 ·'MD PGY-2 ·' MD ATTENDING PSYCHIATRIST

DELAWARE PSYCHIATRIC CENTER RESIDENCYPROGRAM, DELAWARE, USA

**CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:** TANVIR IQBAL, [Email: drtanvir99@gmail.com](mailto:drtanvir99@gmail.com)

# ABSTRACT

Two female patients in their 20s and 30s presented with symptoms which required them to be on antipsychotic medications. They wereon different antipsychotic medications includingpaliperidone,risperidone, haloperidol and olanzapine. Both patients had symptoms such as galactorrhea and menstrual disturbances due to hyperprolactinemia (PRL level

> 100 mcg/L). MRls of brain suggested pituitary tumor in both patients. We started aripiprazole as an adjunct with other antipsychotic medications. After starting aripiprazole, the PRL leveldecreasedover aperiod of two to three weeks.Thiseffectof aripiprazole could be due to its acting as partial agonist on D2 receptor. In both cases, antipsychotic medications and pathological brain lesions were two possible causes for hyperprolactinemia.

# INTRODUCTION

Hyperprolactinemia is the most common pituitary hormone hypersecretion syndrome in both males and females. Prolactin (PRL)-secreting pituitary adenomas (prolactinomas) are the most common cause of PRL levels>100 mcg/L. Other common etiologies are drug induced, pituitary stalk compression, hypothyroidism, renal failure or physiological hypersecretion (e.g. pregnancy, lactation, chest wall stimulation or stress). Symptoms of hyperprolactinemia in women are amenorrhea galactorrhea, and infertility; while symptoms in men ar diminished libido or visualloss.'

Blockade of the dopamine receptors in the tuberoinfundibular tract results in the increased secretion of prolactin, which can result in breast enlargement, galactorrhea, amenorrhea, and inhibited orgasm in women and impotence in men.' Because of the dopamine blocking property of certain antipsychotic medications,theyareknownfor causinghyperprolactinemia.

Aripiprazole exhibits a novel mechanism of action, combining partial agonist activity at dopamine' (D2), dopamine (03), and serotonin 1A (5-HTlA) receptors with antagonist activity at serotonin 2A (5-HT2A) and 02 receptors. Aripiprazole treatment was not associated with increases in prolactin levels during short- or long-term studies (in fact,prolactin levels were shown to be slightly decreasedby aripiprazole).'

A single Caucasian woman in her early 30s with a long riistory of Schizoaffective disorder, who was on paliperidone 6mg QD in community and had developed galactorrhea and abnormal menstrual cyclewasadmittedto DPC.

Pallperidone was discontinued in community due to hyperprolactinemia.

Dueto her symptoms, she was in needof antipsychotic medications. At the time of admission, her PRL level was 34.8 mcg/L, and within one month, it increased to 200 mcg/L. Various antipsychotic medications including quetiapine, thioridaazine, and haloperidol were triedduring this period. She requested that she would like to continue taking haloperidol 10mg daily despite the hyperprolactinemia because haloperidol was helping her commanding auditory hallucinationsand mood symptoms. MRI of brain showed suspected microadenoma in adenohypophysis.

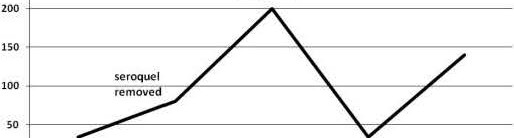
We recommended starting aripiprazole as an adjunct to haloperidol in an effort to reduce PRL level and treat psychotic symptoms. Aripiprazole 10mg QD was started and was increased to 15mg QD in a few days. Seventeen days after starting aripiprazole, PRL level was 34 mcg/L.She wasdischarged on aripiprazole 15mgandhaldol l0mg but was readmitted in six weeks. She had stopped taking aripiprazole in community but continued haloperidol. Upon readmission, we checkedher PRLlevel,whichwas138mcg/L.

# Case Report 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Days** | **Prolactln level**  **(mcg/L)** | **Medications** |
| **0 (dl dU111b:.iu11)** | 34 | **St-tutiud** |
| **30days after admis:sion** | 80 | **Quetlapine (started tapering off) and**  **H,lloperidol (started)** |
| **30 days after starting haldol** | 200 | **Haloperidol (decided to start aripiprazole**  **as an adjunct to haldol)** |
| **17 days afterstarting**  **aripiprazole** | 34 | **Halopeddol + Aripiprazole (pt was**  **discharged)** |
| **7 weeks after discharge** | **138 (upon readmission)** | **Haloperldol (pt 5topped taking aripiprazole incommunity)** |

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**Changes in Prolactin Level (mcg/L)**

250

**.abilityadded**

**ability removed**

***o�v* (seroquel) 3Ddays jhaldol) 6Ddays (h.aldoll 77 days (haldol) 126 days(haldoO**

# Case Report 2

20 y/o single, college student, Caucasian female was admitted from DBH after having sperit more than one month at the facility due to

mania with psychotic features. She was on olanzapine 20mg qhs, valproic acid 250mg qid + 500mg qhs,and risperidone 2mg bid;these

medications were continued at DPC uponadmission. After two weeks, she reported amenorrhea and galactorrhea with breast pain. Prolactin level was measured, which was found to be 192 mcg/L. MRI of brain with contrast was done, which suggested a 3 x 5 mm nodular enhancement of the pituitary stalk withdifferential diagnosis including pituitary tumor.

It was decided to taper off risperidone and olanzapine and start aripiprazole 10mg.Within four daysof stopping risperidal,herPRLlevel droppedto 118.9 mcg/L. Seven daysafter startingaripiprazole,herPRL level decreased to 22.8 mcg/L. She however became more manic with delusional symptoms and olanzapine was needed to be restarted to reach 10mg bid. Her PRL level increased to 78 mcg/L after 20 days of starting olanzapine. PRL level was rechecked again after nine days whenit haddecreased to 39.1 mcg/L.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Days** | **Prolactin level**  **(mq/l)** | **Medications** |
| 0 | **Unknown** | **Zyprex:a 20 mg QHS, Risperidal 2mg PO 810** |
| 16 | 192 | **Risperidone d/c** |
| **4 days after stopping**  **risperidal** | 118.9 | **Ariplprazole 10 mg PO QD was started**  **Olanzapine was.discontinued** |
| **7 days later** |  | **MRI showed 3XS nodule in pituitary stalk** |
| **7 days after starting**  **Aripiprazole** | 22.8 | **Aripiprazote 10mg Qd**  **Olanzapine was restarted** |
| **20 days after starting**  **zyprexa** | 78 | **Aripiprazote 10mg,Olanzapine 20mg qhs** |
| **9 days later** | 39.l | **Aripiprazole 10mg,Olanz,1pine 20mgqhs** |

# DISCUSSION

In the first case report, the patient's prolactin level increased in the community when she was taking paliperidone. At the time of admission, she was started on quetiapine and then finally switched to haloperidol 10mg Qd. PRLlevel keptincreasing (up to 200mcg/L) with different antipsychotic medications and aripiprazole was started as an

adjunct. She continued taking haloperidol + aripiprazole and her PRL

level dropped to 34mcg/L.Her symptoms of hyperprolactinemia were resolved. She stopped taking aripiprazole in the community and at readmission her prolactin level was 138mcg/L.There appeared to be a relationship between the addition of aripiprazole and the reduction of elevated prolactin level. This was in accordance with an article in the American Journal of Psychiatry: "adjunctive aripiprazole treatment reversed hyperprolactinemia in both sexes, resulting in reinstatement of menstruation in female patients, with no significant effects on psychopathology and extrapyramidal symptoms. Aripiprazole has higheraffinity to dopamine D2receptors than haloperidol, whichisthe likely cause of thisobservation" (2007).'

In **the** second case, the patient was on risperidone, olanzapine and

valproic acid when she developed hyperprolactinemia (PRL level-192 mcg/L). Risperidone was discontinued and her PRL level dropped to 118 mcg/L in four days. Her MRI also showed a 3x5mm nodule in pitl.litary stalk.Wedecidedto startaripiprazole and taper off zyprexa.In seven days, her PRL level returned to normal (22.8mcg/L). It was not clear in this case whether stopping olanzapine or starting aripiprazole was the cause of the dropin PRLlevel. Wehad to restart olanzapine and her PRL level increased to 78 mcg/L in 20 days. Upon rechecking after ninedays,PRLlevel camedownto 39.1mcg/L.Fromthis observation, it is possible that olanzapine was causing PRL to increase while aripiprazole wascausing it to decrease. Thiseffect of aripiprazole could be due to itspartialagonist activity towardsD2receptors.

# CONCLUSION

In both cases, antipsychotics including haloperidol, risperidone, palliperodone, and olanzapine appeared to be associated with the rise in prolactin level. Adding aripiprazole as an adjunct appeared to help reduce prolactin levels in both patients, with reversal of hyperprolactinemia symptoms. MRI showed pathological lesions related to the pituitary gland, which could be a contributing factor in raising prolactin levels. More studies need to be done to find appropriate guidelines to use aripiprazole as an adjunct to treat hyperprolactinemia caused by antipsychotic use or by pathological lesions.

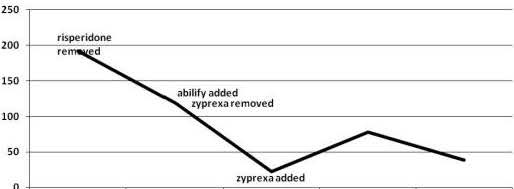
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**Changes in Prolactin Level (mcg/L)**

**16daY$**

**20davs**

**(rlsp.+typreul (zypre:11a+abilify)**

**27days (abilifyl**

**47days**

**56days**

**(abllify+zyp,exa) {ablllfy+zyp,exa')**

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