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IS ESCITALOPRAM EXCHANGEABLE BY CITALOPRAM? A SYSTEMATIC SURVEY

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Objective: Efficacy differences between antidepressants have only been detected exceptionally (Bauer et al., 2009). Due to the fact that escitalopram is the enantiomer of the racemate citalopram the question arose whether this compound possesses besides pharmacodynamic differences (e.g. Sánchez, 2006) also clinically relevant advantages.

Methods: In order to investigate this issue thoroughly the relevant studies of evidence level Ia (systematic surveys of randomized controlled studies) and Ib (randomized controlled trials) were summarized regarding three main outcome parameters: response (decrease of the depressive symptomatology of at least 50% on a depression scale), remission (reduction of the depressive symptomatology below a certain threshold on a depression scale) and change in depression symptomatology (point difference on a depression scale during the treatment period).

Results: Overall, approximately 20% more patients responded under escitalopram than under Citalopram. Regarding remission, this difference is approximately 30%. The point difference on the Montgomery-Åsberg depression scale was between 1 and 2 (statistically significant). In a subanalysis it was found that the superiority of escitalopram increased with increasing initial depression severity.

Conclusion: These very robust data are discussed regarding their clinical implications.

Literatur: Bauer M, Tharmanathan P, Volz HP, Möller HJ, Freemantle N. The effect of venlafaxine compared with other antidepressants and placebo in the treatment of major depression. *Eur Arch Psychiatry Clin Neurosci* 2009; 259: 172-185 Sánchez C, TI: The Pharmacology of Citalopram Enantiomers: The Antagonism by R-Citalopram on the Effect of S-Citalopram. *Basic & Clinical Pharmacology & Toxicology*, 99, 91-95, 2006