ISOTRETINOIN AND PSYCHOSIS: A TOXIC RELATIONSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

Isotretinoin, a widely used retinoid against severe acne, has been associated with various psychiatric side effects, particularly depression, psychotic symptoms and suicidality. The aim of this report is to highlight the need of cautious pharmacological prescription in patients with predisposing factors, which is illustrated with a case of a first psychotic episode in a vulnerable patient parallel with the start of isotretinoin.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A non-systematic literature review was conducted on PubMed database on isotretinoin and psychopathology. The clinical case report was prepared through the review of clinical records.

RESULTS

The authors report a case of a 17-year-old male with a history of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, subthreshold depressive symptoms since childhood, two-year daily cannabis use and acne vulgaris treated with isotretinoin for the prior three months, who was admitted in our child and adolescent psychiatry unit with a first-episode psychosis. The main clinical features -which had increased progressively for 8-10 weeks- were persecutory delusions, thought broadcasting and suicidal thoughts. Isotretinoin was withdrawn and paliperidone was administered, leading to rapid improvement. Diagnosis at discharge was a first psychotic episode with a possible multifactorial origin, to which could have contributed a primary affective or non-affective psychotic disorder, cannabis use and -as a potential pivotal factor based on the exquisite temporal relationship- isotretinoin.

CONCLUSIONS

Treatment with isotretinoin can be followed by major psychiatric side effects. A higher awareness of this phenomenon is advisable for better risk/benefit prescription decisions in vulnerable patients, as well as for careful monitoring, early diagnosis and adequate management.

MAIN REFERENCES

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