

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACID TREATMENT OF DEPRESSIVE BREAKTHROUGH DURING UNIPOLAR MAINTENANCE

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Objective

Studies have reported that countries with high intake of fish oil have low rates of depression. We studied a specific omega-3 fatty acid, the ethyl ester of eicosapentaenoic acid (E-EPA) as an adjunct to antidepressant treatment for breakthrough depression in recurrent unipolar patients on maintenance therapy.

Methods

Design was four-week parallel group double-blind add-on to ongoing antidepressant therapy. Twenty patients participated, seventeen females and three males, all with diagnosis of current major depression.

Results

Highly significant benefits were found by week 3 of treatment for eicosapentaenoic acid compared to placebo.

Conclusions

It is not possible to distinguish whether eicosapentaenoic acid augments antidepressant action in the manner of lithium or has independent antidepressant properties of its own.