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IS VARENICLINE ABLE TO PREVENT SMOKING CESSATION INDUCED AFFECTIVE SYMPTOMS?

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The selective alpha4-beta2 nicotinic acetylcholine receptor (nAChR) partial agonist varenicline has been shown to be effective in the treatment of tobacco dependence by counteracting withdrawal symptoms and reducing smoking reward. However, the need to test safety, especially in smokers with varying co-morbidities and risk patterns is highlighted. There are some publications reporting exacerbation of psychiatric symptoms in subjects with pre-existing psychiatric disorders associated with varenicline treatment.

This case-report describes a patient whose several smoking cessation attempts led to enduring nicotine-related symptoms such as depression and suicidal tendencies. All further cessation attempts under medical control with nicotine patches, bupropion and psychotherapy failed. At least reducing her daily dose by one cigarette already led to suicidal thoughts. We took her into inpatient treatment and started an uptitration with varenicline. Unlike earlier attempts there were no complications during the detoxication and depressive symptoms improved clearly.

Affective symptoms like depression are known to develop during nicotine cessation. The improving of affective symptoms in this case might be a result of the partial agonistic effects of varenicline.