Efficacy and safety of flibanserin to treat women with ‘hypoactive sexual desire disorder’; a meta-analysis

The authors of the meta-analysis discussed here conclude that treating women with ‘hypoactive sexual desire disorder’ (HSDD) with flibanserin results in an average of half an additional satisfactory sexual experience a month. The drug has to be taken daily and therefore has daily side-effects. Flibanserin was statistically significantly more effective than placebo, but its clinical relevance was small (1 additional point on a scale of 84; 6 additional satisfactory sexual experiences a year). The differences in side-effects were also statistically significant and were also clinically relevant.

Sexual dysfunction often has multifactorial causes, and medical interventions should be evaluated with this in mind. Unduly high expectations of using a ‘pill’, whether blue or red, are unjustified. FDA staff have defended their decision to authorise flibanserin by saying that women can try for themselves whether improvements to their sexual experiences caused by the drug outweigh the risks of side-effects. Nevertheless, not only the efficacy of flibanserin but also its safety appear to have so far been insufficiently established, as studies have been of doubtful methodological quality and involved a selected healthy population. The present meta-analysis confirms that its effect in terms of increasing sexual desire is minimal.

References*


*The literature refers to the Dutch text