Off-label use of mirtazapine to treat insomnia

Effectiveness unproven, does have adverse effects

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The antidepressant mirtazapine (Remeron®) is increasingly used by patients suffering from insomnia. However, this usage is not based on evidence of effectivity from randomised studies. At best, there are some suggestions, based on its theoretical mode of action. The rationale behind the increased prescription of mirtazapine for insomnia is unclear. Possible reasons could be the fear of addiction that could arise when using benzodiazepine receptor agonists (such as temazepam or zolpidem), or the fact that these drugs are not reimbursed by insurers. But mirtazapine also has problematic adverse effects, such as daytime drowsiness. In view of the possible effect on driving ability due to this drowsiness, the Dutch driving licence authority CBR has special regulations for patients using mirtazapine. From the point of view of rational pharmacotherapy, there is no reason to prescribe mirtazapine off-label for insomnia.

Ge-Bu Indication

Literature references

Authors

* Marielle A.E. Nieuwhof

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