Incidence of Neuropsychiatric Adverse Effects Following the Initiation of Gabapentin or Pregabalin for the Treatment of Neuropathic Pain

Adnan A Badahdah, MD* Mazen A Basheikh, MD*

ABSTRACT

Neuropathic pain is a challenging condition to manage clinically, with symptoms that have a significant impact on patients' quality of life. Gabapentin and pregabalin are two of the primary options, demonstrating good efficacy and tolerability. Psycho-behavioral side effects of gabapentinoids are relatively well-documented, although they are observed more frequently in the context of epilepsy, highlighting the importance of careful monitoring for these adverse effects in the management of neuropathic pain. We conducted a retrospective chart review of adult patients with neuropathic pain treated with gabapentin or pregabalin at a neurology outpatient center in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, between May 2023 and May 2024. Patients with at least two follow-up visits over six months were included. Data on demographics, diagnosis, treatment, and neuropsychiatric adverse effects were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests. A total of 110 patients were included in the study, with 54.5% being male and 50.9% aged 60 years or older. Polyneuropathy was the primary diagnosis in 45% of patients, and 30.9% had experienced neuropathic pain for more than 12 months. Gabapentin was administered to 74 patients, while 36 patients received pregabalin. 94.5% of patients did not report any psycho-behavioral adverse effects. Six patients experienced mild to moderate symptoms. Three patients complained of sleep disturbances, two of apathy, and one of anxiety. Noticeably, five of these six patients were over the age of 50. No patients discontinued their medication due to these adverse effects. Gabapentin and pregabalin demonstrate an admirable safety profile for neuropathic pain, supporting high compliance and improved quality of life. Gabapentinoids appear to present a lower risk of psychiatric side effects when used for neuropathic pain compared to epilepsy, making them a preferred first-line option for symptom control in neuropathic pain management.

Keywords: Gabapentin, Pregabalin, Neuropsychiatric, Adverse effects, Neuropathic pain

Bahrain Med Bull 2025; 47 (4): 2549 - 2553

* Department of Medicine,
Faculty of Medicine, University of Jeddah,
Saudi Arabia.
E-mail: aaobadahdah@uj.edu.sa