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The role of Bupropion in treating sexual dysfunction in women - an evidence-based review

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Background/Aim: Hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD) is a common female sexual dysfunction with reported rates of 10-30%. The treatment is multifactorial and bupropion has been explored as a potential treatment for HSDD. Our goal is to determine the evidence of the efficacy of bupropion in the treatment of HSDD in nondepressed women.

Method: A systematic review of meta-analyses, systematic reviews, randomized controlled trials (RCT) and clinical guidelines, published between 01/2009 and 12/2012, was performed in Medline and Índice de Portugueses Databases, in English, Spanish and Portuguese, using the MeSH terms bupropion, “sexual dysfunctions, psychological” and female. We used the Strength of Recommendation Taxonomy (SORT) scale of American Family Physician to assign levels of evidence and strength of recommendations.

Results: From the 121 articles obtained, four met the inclusion criteria: one RCT, two classic reviews and one not controlled clinical trial. In the RCT the treatment with bupropion significantly improved HSDD in comparison with placebo (NE 1). One of the classic reviews, despite initial positive results in literature, concluded data are limited (NE 3). The other classic review showed that bupropion may have positive sexual effects, such as increasing the frequency of sexual arousal and desire (NE 3). The not controlled clinical trial indicates that bupropion can induce significant changes in sexual desire and arousability in a substantial percentage of women (NE 3).

Conclusion: It seems reasonable to recommend the use of bupropion in the treatment of HSDD (SOR B). Although, there is a need for future studies to evaluate the cost/benefit of bupropion in the treatment of HSDD.