

Tramadol Sustained-Release Capsules

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The treatment of chronic pain represents one of the major challenges facing modern medicine and employs a strategy different to those commonly used; this strategy must be oriented to optimise patient adherence to treatment in order to reduce the number of treatment interruptions due to adverse effects.

Even though it is not a fatal condition, chronic pain may have an apparently greater socioeconomic impact than that caused by pathologies such as hypertension, diabetes mellitus, stroke, cancer or HIV infection. Adequate treatment of chronic pain reduces its related, and very high, direct and indirect costs from the point of view of both society and the individual.

Together with analgesic efficacy, a suitable drug for use in the long-term treatment of chronic pain must optimise patient compliance in terms of the various factors contributing to this concept. As well as providing analgesia, a pain reliever must be able to guarantee the best possible quality of life through minimal interference with the patient's professional, social and daily activities.

Several international studies comparing sustained-release (SR) tramadol capsules with SR tramadol tablets or immediate-release tramadol capsules have shown that major endpoints were more easily reached with the SR capsule formulation. The multiple-units slow-release capsule system ensures that:

- the titration schedule is simpler and easier to manage because of the reduction in dosing frequency (twice daily), with tolerability advantages;
- the good analgesic efficacy, typical of tramadol, corresponds with an acceptable or low incidence of adverse effects, reducing or obviating the need for adjuvant drugs;
- the incidence of both adverse effects due to abrupt peaks in plasma concentrations and of breakthrough pain (due to rapidly decreasing post-peak plasma concentrations) are reduced because of the uniformity of tramadol plasma concentrations.

The predictability of compound absorption is an added bonus of the SR capsule formulation resulting in a smooth and more gradual release of tramadol that is not influenced by food intake.

Based on these considerations, I suggest that since this particular SR capsule formulation of tramadol is able to simultaneously guarantee effectiveness and tolerability, it is a valid option to improve the quality of life of patients with chronic pain. ▲