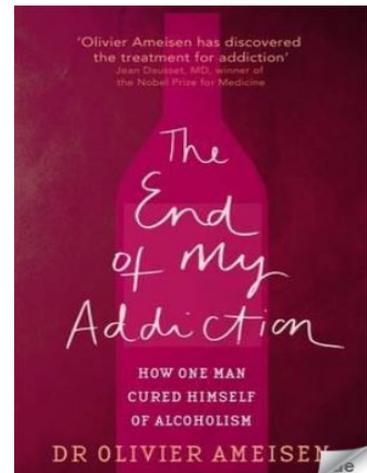


Dear Colleague,

There are a handful of drugs that we use to reduce alcohol consumption.... craving reduction – Naloxone and Campral, and aversion treatment – Antabuse. Personally I have seen very little benefit from these medications. Some studies showed that campral doubled the 12 month abstinence rate – the abstinence rate in the placebo group was 2% and in the campral group 4%. That means 96% of people were still drinking at the rate they were 12 months ago. That would be consistent with my experience.

12 years ago I was part of a team at Royal Prince Alfred hospital that assessed people in a baclofen treatment for alcoholism trial. Results, like many at the time showed poor efficacy.

Based on queries from several of my patients 2 years ago I came across a book written by a practising cardiologist who was destroying his life with alcoholism and was heading towards serious mental and physical destruction. He began to treat himself with baclofen..... ,adding in 10mg per day every week or so. He continued to increase the dose to around 150mg and for the first time in his life he has achieved sustainable abstinence. Despite Dr Ameisen's medical credentials, I still thought it had the flavour of a zealous fluke – a an anecdote at best.



However I was confident that high dose baclofen is safe so I began to treat a man who was also destroying his life. He was a professional, excellent job, young family but it was being destroyed by years of serious drinking. From the time he began baclofen he has achieved daily abstinence for 12 months. He is astounded and his friends, family and colleagues are all equally amazed. I think the first two weeks were placebo and motivation, then the higher dose of baclofen kicked in. This man never got above 50mg. He has had over 12 months abstinence with no other intervention, groups or counseling.

I began to select people who I thought would be happy to do this off-label treatment, people who were able to do their own research and understand that the treatment had not been scrutinised and tested in randomised placebo controlled studies. Mostly these people were professional and educated. The abstinence rates have been startling – either total abstinence or huge reductions in consumption. It seems that the craving disappears but the emptiness and anxiety that many abstinent alcoholics feel is not apparent.

Not only is this an off label use, it is wildly outside the normal baclofen doses. Adding in 10mg every 3-4 days until the abstinence feels secure is the process: that may be several hundred mg

Baclofen is a cheap drug out of patent, it is not likely to attract the commercial attention required to take the drug to the next treatment level I highlight this medication and its potential benefits because it is cheap, safe, well tolerated, highly acceptable and from my experience of n=8, the efficacy is startling.

Type baclofen + alcoholism into your search engine and you are likely to see these two sites. They are a good start for reading but the internet is full of experiences like my patients have had. If you would like to discuss this or any other matters around addiction medicine then please get in touch.

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/766632>

<https://www.drugs.com/comments/baclofen/for-alcohol-withdrawal.html>

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