Keep Patients on Acamprosate Through Relapse

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SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ. — Alcohol abusers who take acamprosate and relapse are still better off continuing to take the drug because they have an improved chance of achieving abstinence, company data show.

Pooled data from three separate, controlled trials of the drug suggest that almost three times more patients treated through a relapse eventually achieve a period of abstinence, compared with controls, Dr. Eugene Schneider said in a poster presentation at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry.

In the studies, most of the participants relapsed at some point. Of the 372 people treated with acamprosate (1,998 mg/day), 72% relapsed, and 85% of 375 placebo-control patients relapsed. One of the trials lasted 13 weeks, one lasted 48 weeks, and the third lasted 52 weeks.

Overall, 13% of the acamprosate-treated individuals who relapsed were subsequently abstinent for the remainder of the study and an additional 20% who relapsed were abstinent at their final study evaluation. The comparable figures for the control patients were 5% and 10%, respectively, said Dr. Schneider, an associate director for medical affairs at Forest Laboratories Inc., New York.

Acamprosate-treated patients who achieved a period of abstinence after relapse had a greater mean number of days of abstinence than did controls: 24 days vs. 14 days. In the patients who relapsed but eventually became abstinent for the remainder of the study, the treated patients were more likely to have had a longer abstinence: a mean of 28 days for the treated patients, compared with 12 days for the control patients.

"It is worthwhile treating patients through a relapse," Dr. Schneider said in an interview. ■