Atomoxetine, Parent Training, and Their Effects on Sleep in Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder


ABSTRACT

Objective: Sleep disturbance is often a problem for children with either autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Psychostimulant medications used to treat ADHD symptoms can exacerbate this problem. For children with ASD and ADHD, atomoxetine (ATX) is a viable alternative to psychostimulants. We investigated the effects of ATX and a manualized parent training (PT) program targeting noncompliance, on the sleep quality of children with ASD and ADHD.

Methods: Participants in a randomized clinical trial were treated with ATX + PT, ATX alone, PT alone, or placebo (PBO) alone, for 10 weeks. Fifty-four of 128 (42%) caregivers completed the Children's Sleep Habits Questionnaire (CSHQ) at baseline and endpoint. Analysis of covariance was used to investigate possible differences between treatment groups.

Results: There were no significant differences between treatment groups, including PBO on the CSHQ 33-Item total score, total hours of sleep per day, and total minutes awake after sleep onset at the study endpoint.

Conclusion: ATX appears sleep neutral. Clinicians who treat ADHD symptoms in children and adolescents with ASD may prefer ATX over psychostimulants when sleep disturbance is an issue.