



Psychopharmacology **TIDBITS**

Ann M. Hamer, PharmD

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-TB- Labeling Change for Paxil. GlaxoSmithKline has been forced to admit that *Paxil* (paroxetine) can cause severe withdrawal symptoms. Prior to inspection by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, the drug company insisted that withdrawal symptoms associated with *Paxil* were rare and mild. Print advertisements in popular magazines read, "Talk to your doctor about non habit forming Paxil today." These claims have been found to be misleading and fraudulent.

The new labeling requested by the FDA states that withdrawal problems have been frequent in clinical trials. This change in labeling was not published until late December 2001—conveniently missing the deadline for the 2002 edition of the *Physicians' Desk Reference*.

Criteria to help define the SSRI withdrawal syndrome have been published and can be found on the web (<http://www.psycom.net/depression.central.withdrawal.html>).

Current recommendations published by GSK for tapering Paxil suggest decreasing the daily dose by 10mg at weekly intervals. Once a daily dose of 20mg/day is reached, patients should continue on this dose for one week before treatment is stopped. Other, more conservative tapering schedules recommend decreasing the daily dose of paroxetine by 10mg every two weeks until the dose is 10mg/day. After two weeks of 10mg/day, the dose should be further decreased to 5mg/day for two weeks. [*The Consultant Pharmacist, October 1997, page 1117*] It is important to recognize that each patient will respond differently and tapering schedules should be individualized.

-TB- Topamax Trials in Weight Loss Have Been Discontinued. Ortho-McNeil/Johnson & Johnson, the makers of *Topamax* (topiramate), have discontinued clinical trials of the drug as a weight loss agent due to significant side effects at higher doses. Adverse effects included tingling sensations in extremities, memory problems, fatigue and sleepiness. The drug company is hoping to use a controlled release formulation of topiramate that will perhaps reduce the frequency and severity of side effects. *Topamax* is indicated for the adjunctive treatment of partial onset seizures in adult and pediatric patients and is not recommended for use as a weight loss agent.
