



PIC QUESTION OF THE WEEK: 8/28/06

Q: Why would Flomax® be prescribed for a woman?

A: Tamsulosin (Flomax®) is a selective alpha-1a/1d adrenergic antagonist indicated for the treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). It has also been used off-label to increase the passage of ureteral stones (men and women), improve bladder storage in patients with spinal cord injury, and reduce symptoms in males with radiation-induced urethritis. In addition, the drug has been relatively effective in some small studies for neurogenic bladder and other types of voiding dysfunction. A few studies have evaluated the use of tamsulosin for urinary problems in women. Although primarily found in the prostate, alpha-1a receptors are also located in the spinal cord, bladder neck, periurethral tissue, and the urethra. This may be the reason women occasionally complain of *BPH-like* symptoms as well as other forms of urinary dysfunction. Alpha-blockers can increase urinary outflow by decreasing urethral sphincter tone, thus providing potential benefit in patients with urinary retention and overflow incontinence. The mechanism for their possible efficacy in some types of bladder dysfunction in women may also be due to inhibition of alpha-receptors in the bladder neck and/or proximal urethra. There is some recent evidence that subtypes of alpha-receptors are present in the bladder detrusor. Anticholinergic agents have historically been used in types of bladder dysfunction associated with frequency and urgency because the problem was thought to be caused only by cholinergic over-stimulation of the bladder wall. These drugs are often effective, but possess significant adverse effects (dry mouth, blurred vision, etc.) that can be especially troubling for an elderly patient. Alpha-blockers such as tamsulosin exert effects on the bladder wall and might be useful in some women with overactive bladder. Doxazosin, another alpha-blocker, has also been used in the management of voiding symptoms in women. The usual dose of tamsulosin in various types of bladder dysfunction is 0.4 mg daily. Adverse effects associated with alpha-blockers include signs and symptoms of orthostatic hypotension such as dizziness and syncope. These appear to be less frequent with tamsulosin than other alpha-blockers. Drugs such as tamsulosin may be beneficial in some women with voiding dysfunction; however, data to support this use is relatively limited.

References:

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