

MCPAP Clarification on the FDA Celexa Warning

The FDA's warning is based on reports it received of people (adults) taking Celexa who developed prolonged QTc. In addition, a study involving 119 adults found that higher doses of citalopram (up to 60 mg per day) increased the abnormal heart activity. Since the study was done only on adults, we do not know what the effects would be on children and adolescents. It is also worthy to note that in long-term studies, dosages over 40 mg per day have not been shown to be of benefit in adults.

While the FDA warns that a dose over 40 mg per day in adults is associated with a prolonged QTc interval, we really do not know what an equivalent dosage for a child may be. Usage of Celexa in a child is currently off-label. While this medication can be helpful, off-label use of this medication should be treated with caution. You might want to consider the use of FDA approved medications in the treatment of depression in children and adolescents before prescribing Celexa.

The FDA alert recommends that Celexa dosages greater than 40 mg should no longer be prescribed. Please consider reviewing any current patient for whom more than 40 mg of Celexa is being prescribed to assess whether you may be able to reduce his or her dose. If a patient does require more than 40 mg per day, an EKG should be obtained, and a consultation with a psychiatrist is strongly suggested.

If your patient is already taking Celexa, you might want to also consider doing the following as an important part of the overall justification of continued use of this treatment:

1. Obtain a family history for sudden cardiac death or prolonged QTc
2. Assess your patient for any current cardiac symptoms, such as tachycardia or syncope
3. Review the patient's history for the use of concurrent meds that may prolong QTc
4. Obtain an EKG and obtain EKGs at dosage increases

Full wording of the alert may be found at:

<http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch/SafetyInformation/SafetyAlertsforHumanMedicalProducts/ucm269481.htm>)

Please do not hesitate to call your [regional MCPAP team](#) with any questions regarding this medication.

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