Sprcial discussion: Future Roles for Tincture of Opium in Medical Intervention for Opioid Dependence; Treads and Hopes

Hamed. Ekhtiari. M.D

Abstract

Opium tincture or tincture of opium (TOP), also known as Laudanum, is an alcoholic herbal preparation of opium. It is made by combining ethanol with opium latex or powder. After works of Paracelsus, the ١٦th century Swiss-German alchemist, who discovered that the alkaloids in opium are far more soluble in alcohol compared to water and named Opium tincture as Laudanum, this drug has been found a broad range of applications as the drug of choice for practically every ailment through ١٧th to ١٩th centuries. The early ٢٠th century brought increased regulation of all manner of narcotics, including laudanum, as the addictive properties of opium became more widely understood. By the late ٢٠th century, TOP's use was almost exclusively confined to treating severe diarrhea. During these thirty years, The efficacy and cost-effectiveness of opioid substitution therapy for the treatment of opioid addiction has been well documented by methadone and buprenorphine. Based on the idea of substitution therapy, TOP and slow releasing oral morphine (SROM) have been proposed as the new alternatives. TOP could be used in three different ways in interventions for opioid dependency, first, as a supportive drug to reduce withdrawal syndrome during detoxification programs, second, as a substitution drug in long term maintenance, third, as a legal form of opioid drugs for harm reduction purposes. A little but growing evidences are supporting effectiveness of TOP for detoxification programs, in Iran, some preliminary open label studies showed effectiveness of TOP as a detoxifying drug in three to six month program, Now another open label study is evaluating TOP in a specific detoxification program with monthly evaluation and providing long term follow up after reaching to abstinence. There are a strong debate among the policy makers and clinicians on implementation of TOP in Iranian National Substance Abuse Treatment Facilities. In this article, We reviewed the proposed threads and hopes that is expected for TOP in Iran and other countries with the same situations.

Key Words: *Tincture of opium, treatment, opioid*

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