

Gabapentin for the Treatment of Anxiety in a Patient with Acute Intermittent Porphyria



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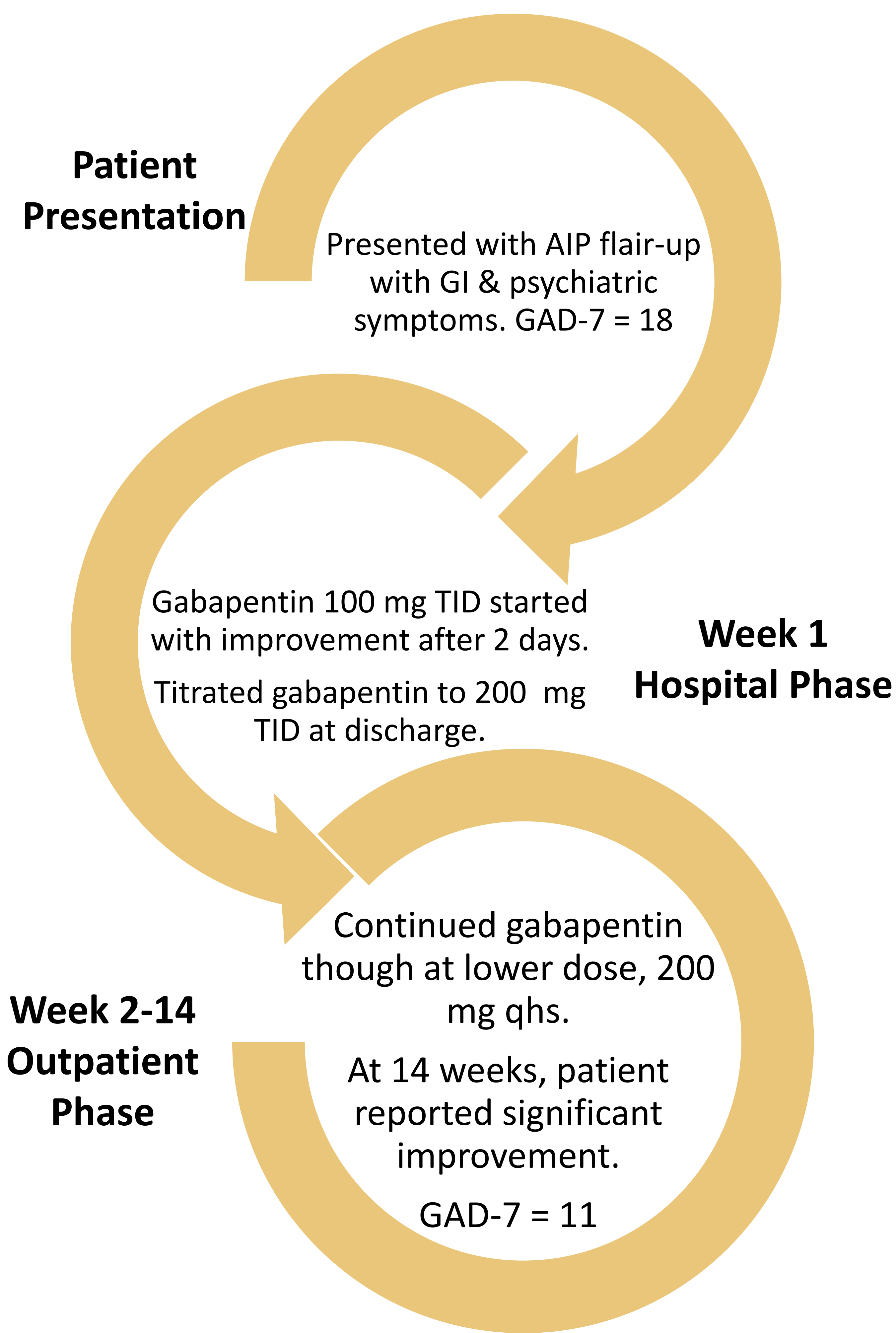
Background

- Acute Intermittent Porphyria (AIP) associated anxiety is described in the literature in both acute and chronic phases of the illness. ¹
- It is challenging to treat given many psychotropic medications are associated with AIP flare-ups. ²
- We present the first ever case we can find in the literature using gabapentin to treat anxiety in a patient with AIP during both phases of her illness.

Case Details

- 40-year female with a history of AIP, GAD and MDD who presented to the hospital for an AIP flare-up with abdominal pain, nausea and poor oral intake.
- Psychiatric symptoms were acute and chronic anxiety. Initial GAD-7 score in hospital was 18. No other psychotropic medicines were prescribed.
- Previous failures on trials of SSRIs, SNRIs, bupropion and buspirone. Treatment is complicated as many psychotropics are contra-indicated in AIP as they will induce or worsen flare-ups. ²
- Gabapentin 100 mg TID was prescribed in the hospital with rapid improvement in anxiety. Patient discharged on gabapentin 200 mg TID.
- At 14 weeks follow up the patient's GAD-7 score was reduced to 11 with reported reduced impairment in overall functionality related to anxiety. There were no other psychotropic medications prescribed or psychotherapy employed during this period.

Timeline



Discussion

- AIP is characterized by a deficiency in the enzyme porphobilinogen deaminase resulting in improper heme production and accumulation of 5-aminolevulinic acid (ALA).
- Subsequent neuronal damage by ALA can lead to a hypo-GABAergic state with 50% reduction in GABAergic synaptic sites reported in rats. ³
- Thus, psychotropics that increase GABA levels may be helpful in treating anxiety, prompting us to choose gabapentin for this patient.
- Gabapentin is also considered safe in AIP patients, compared to certain benzodiazepines, along with its additional benefits for pain management and seizure control. ²

Conclusion

- It is important for C-L psychiatrists to be aware of AIP related toxic effects on the GABA receptors in the brain as well as limitations of using certain psychotropics associated with AIP disease flare-ups.
- This case presents a novel treatment for anxiety related to acute AIP flare ups and chronic AIP.

References

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Class	Type	Generic & Brand Name	Conclusion ²
CNS	Anticonvulsant	Gabapentin Neurontin	Very likely to be safe for prolonged use by individuals with AIP, based on consistent evidence