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Pharmacology of cognitive enhancers for exposure-based therapy of fear, anxiety and trauma-related disorders

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Abstract

Pathological fear and anxiety are highly debilitating and, despite considerable advances in psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy they remain insufficiently treated in many patients with PTSD, phobias, panic and other anxiety disorders. Increasing preclinical and clinical evidence indicates that pharmacological treatments including cognitive enhancers, when given as adjuncts to psychotherapeutic approaches [cognitive behavioral therapy including extinction-based exposure therapy] enhance treatment efficacy, while using anxiolytics such as benzodiazepines as adjuncts can undermine long-term treatment success. The purpose of this review is to outline the literature showing how pharmacological interventions targeting neurotransmitter systems including serotonin, dopamine, noradrenaline, histamine, glutamate, GABA, cannabinoids, neuropeptides (oxytocin,

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