

For immediate release

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Ibogaine reduces methadone tolerance in patients with opioid dependence

In Catalonia, a pioneering clinical trial in the world demonstrates the efficacy of innovative solutions to the opioid crisis.

Barcelona - A [clinical trial](#) conducted in Catalonia is opening new perspectives in the treatment of opioid dependence, one of the biggest public health crises globally. The study, led by the ICEERS team in collaboration with the Servei d'Addiccions i Salut Mental and the Servei de Cardiologia del Hospital Universitari Sant Joan de Reus (HUSJR), has investigated the use of low doses of ibogaine as a tool to reduce methadone tolerance in patients on methadone maintenance. This approach could facilitate opioid detoxification and offer a promising alternative in the treatment of substance use disorders.

The research, led by Dr. José Carlos Bouso (ICEERS) and Dr. Tre Borràs (HUSJR), and framed in [the doctoral thesis](#) of Dr. Genís Oña, represents an innovative step in the search for solutions based on scientific evidence for a problem that affects millions of people worldwide. In this publication, the results of a single 100 mg dose have been presented. The publication of the full results - which include two treatment groups with six doses of ibogaine each, the first maintaining 100 mg per session and the second increasing 100 mg at each session to 600 mg - is scheduled next June. This is the first randomized controlled clinical trial with ibogaine in 67 years since CIBA Pharmaceuticals patented the use of ibogaine to reduce morphine tolerance. This is complemented by a phenomenological ethnographic study on the experience of the participants, led by Antoni Llor, PhD in Anthropology, from MARC-DAFITS-URV.

Encouraging results for a complex problem

The study demonstrates that low-dose ibogaine administration has the potential to reduce methadone tolerance in patients in maintenance programs. This finding is particularly relevant, since methadone, although used as a substitution treatment in harm reduction programs, can generate long-term dependence due to its prolonged half-life.

According to Dr. José Carlos Bouso, scientific director of ICEERS, "ibogaine is a promising tool for eliminating withdrawal syndrome and reversing opioid tolerance. Its use in controlled doses allows for a gradual decrease in methadone dependence, paving the way for a more effective and sustainable recovery."

The research also highlights that this methodology could be extended to the treatment of dependence related to shorter-acting opioids, such as heroin, broadening its clinical applicability. These results open the door to future studies to further explore the therapeutic possibilities of ibogaine in a controlled medical context.

In addition, the project reinforces ICEERS' commitment to the development of therapies based on natural substances, respecting both the scientific knowledge and cultural traditions of psychoactive plants. This holistic approach aligns with its mission to transform paradigms in the field of mental health and medicine.

A needed breakthrough in the opioid crisis

The opioid crisis has left a devastating impact in numerous countries, with millions of people affected and a growing number of overdose-related deaths. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) *World Drug Report 2024*, approximately 60 million people consumed opium derivatives in 2022, ranking it as the second most consumed drug in the world, after cannabis.

In addition, opioids are responsible for the largest number of deaths associated with the use of psychoactive substances. According to the UNODC *World Drug Report 2018*, these accounted for 76% of drug use-related deaths globally. In the United States, the opioid crisis has reached alarming levels. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that, in 2021, there were approximately 80,000 opioid overdose deaths. Of these, more than 70,000 were related to synthetic opioids such as fentanyl.

In this context, the development of new therapeutic approaches is of fundamental importance. According to Dr. Tre Borràs, "the results of this clinical trial, although preliminary, represent tangible hope for those facing the difficulties of dependence on opioids such as heroin or fentanyl."

ICEERS and the Hospital Universitari Sant Joan de Reus have demonstrated with this study that scientific innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration are key tools to address public health challenges. With an evidence-based vision focused on patient welfare, ibogaine research marks a turning point in the search for effective and sustainable solutions.

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