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Self-Reported Medication and Herb/Supplement Use by Women with and without Fibromyalgia

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Abstract

Methods: Using a telephone survey of 434 women who self-reported having and 198 women, who denied having fibromyalgia (FM) (aged 18–80 years), we compared women on self-reported number, major types, and effectiveness of currently taken conventional medications and herbs/supplements.

Results: Ninety-three percent of women with FM reported taking at least one medication (1855 total, 499 types), on average compared with 56% of women without FM (269 total, 172 types). The women with FM reported taking antidepressant drugs; more reported selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI)-type with moderate effectiveness than tricyclic amines deemed to have strong effectiveness. Few were taking dual uptake inhibitors or the now approved pregabalin. Nearly 30% reported taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID), which have weak efficacy evidence. Less than 8% of controls reported taking either antidepressants or NSAIDs. Having FM was associated with these medications plus guaifenesin, anticonvulsants, muscle relaxants, narcotics, other analgesics, and benzodiazepines.

Highest effectiveness scores were for opioid narcotics and guaifenesin.

Forty-three percent of women with FM reported taking at least one herb/supplement compared with 23% of control women. The most common types were omega esterified fatty acids, glucosamine, and ginkgo. No particular type distinguished between the groups. Both groups tended to rate overall effectiveness lower for herbs/supplements than for conventional medications.