

Basal serum cortisol and dexamethasone-induced growth hormone release in the alcohol dependence syndrome

Farren, C. K., Clare, A. W. and Dinan, T. G. (1995)

Keywords: alcohol dependence; growth hormone; dexamethasone; cortisol

Abstract

We assessed the basal serum cortisol and the growth hormone (GH) response to dexamethasone in a group of completely detoxified male alcoholics and a group of healthy controls. There was a significant baseline elevation of serum cortisol in the alcoholics relative to the controls, and in the type 2 alcoholics relative to the type 1 alcoholics. There was no difference found in GH response to dexamethasone between the alcoholics and controls or between the types of alcoholics. There was no relationship found between the age of subject, length of abstinence from alcohol or severity of alcohol dependence and GH response. There was a significant relationship between severity of alcohol dependence and type of alcohol abuser. This may indicate a subtle impairment of the HPA in post withdrawal alcoholics, and between types of alcoholics, which does not appear to be at the pituitary or hypothalamic level.