

Early response to venlafaxine antidepressant correlates with lower ACTH levels prior to pharmacological treatment

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A link between stressful life events and development or exacerbation of depression has been established via a large body of evidence. An alteration in the regulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis in depression has also been associated with an increase in cortisol secretion. As arginine-vasopressin (AVP) plays an important role in the activation of HPA axis during stress, the present study investigated ACTH and cortisol secretory response induced by an AVP-related peptide desmopressin (ddAVP) in patients with major depression. Prior to antidepressant treatment, endocrinological parameters were evaluated and correlated with the clinical response to venlafaxine treatment, which offers a dual antidepressant action. Depressive patients with no other psychiatric pathology were evaluated with 17-item Hamilton Depression Scale (HAM-D) in order to follow-up the response to venlafaxine. After 1 wk of treatment, 60% of patients reduced their initial HAM-D score to at least 25%; t