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LORAZEPAM-INDUCED HEIGHTENED SEXUAL DESIRE

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Introduction: Drug-induced increased libido has been reported mainly with dopaminergic agents. Although benzodiazepines may cause behavioural disinhibition, they were rarely related to sexual undesired urges.

Case: A 62-year-old woman was seen for breast mucinous carcinoma. Besides mild hypertension and initial insomnia she was otherwise previously healthy. She was chronically medicated with ramipril and diazepam 5mg id. Tumour resection was carried out and chemotherapy with FEC-T was began. One week after, in a follow-up visit, she complained having difficulties on sleep onset. Lorazepam 1mg at the bedtime was prescribed. After the first dose she felt an overwhelming sexual desire, the urge making her to repeatedly open and close her legs, feeling even the physical intercourse. This sensation fade gradually over the next few hours. On the following day she decided to take another lorazepam pill to be sure it was the cause of that strange feelings. The symptoms of the previous night were completely reproduced. She has now completed the chemotherapy and proposed to adjuvant radiotherapy. She never felt those symptoms again and did not take another lorazepam.

Conclusion: It is believed that dopaminomimetic drugs can heighten sexual desire by increasing dopamine concentration on the mesolimbic pathway. In this way, benzodiazepines, as GABA enhancers, would inhibit dopamine release leading to reduced libido. On the other hand, GABA also inhibits serotonergic-mediated vigilance and impulse control, leading to disinhibition and impulsivity. In our patient, lorazepam has caused a “virtual intercourse” as previously found in electric and mechanic stimulation of septal region and amygdala.