Pregabalin for the Treatment of Fibromyalgia Syndrome

Results of a Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Trial

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Objective. Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain and lowered pain threshold. Other prominent symptoms include disordered sleep and fatigue. FMS affects an estimated 2% of the population, predominantly women. This trial was designed to evaluate the efficacy and safety of pregabalin, a novel α2-δ ligand, for treatment of symptoms associated with FMS.

Methods. This multicenter, double-blind, 8-week, randomized clinical trial compared the effects of placebo with those of 150, 300, and 450 mg/day pregabalin on pain, sleep, fatigue, and health-related quality of life in 529 patients with FMS. The primary outcome variable was the comparison of end point mean pain scores, derived from daily diary ratings of pain intensity, between each of the pregabalin treatment groups and the placebo group.

Results. Pregabalin at 450 mg/day significantly reduced the average severity of pain in the primary analysis compared with placebo (−0.93 on a 0–10 scale) (P < 0.001), and significantly more patients in this group had >50% improvement in pain at the end point (29%, versus 13% in the placebo group; P = 0.003). Pregabalin at 300 and 450 mg/day was associated with significant improvements in sleep quality, fatigue, and global measures of change. Pregabalin at 450 mg/day improved several domains of health-related quality of life. Dizziness and somnolence were the most frequent adverse events. Rates of discontinuation due to adverse events were similar across all 4 treatment groups.

Conclusion. Pregabalin at 450 mg/day was efficacious for the treatment of FMS, reducing symptoms of pain, disturbed sleep, and fatigue compared with placebo. Pregabalin was well tolerated and improved global measures and health-related quality of life.

Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) affects 3–6 million people in the US, with a prevalence in the general population estimated at 2% and an increased frequency among women (1). A characteristic symptom complex of chronic widespread musculoskeletal pain, disordered sleep, and fatigue associated with a lowered pain threshold is shared among those patients meeting the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) classification criteria for FMS (2). The etiology and pathogenesis of FMS are not well understood, but they are probably
multifactorial. Available evidence points toward dysregulation of neurotransmitter function and central pain sensitization as fundamental mechanisms (4). The symptoms of FMS overlap considerably with those of other chronic illnesses, such as chronic fatigue syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome, temporomandibular disorder, and chronic headache syndromes (5). The lifetime prevalence of anxiety and depression is higher among patients with FMS than it is in the normal population (6). However, the presence of psychiatric comorbidity is neither necessary nor sufficient for the diagnosis of FMS (7).

At present, treatment of FMS is symptom based, aiming to alleviate pain, increase restorative sleep, and improve physical function. Nonpharmacologic therapies include education, psychological or cognitive-based therapies, and exercise-based treatments (8). Pharmacologic treatments include medications that have a neuromodulatory function, such as tricyclic compounds, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor and serotonin/norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor antidepressants, anxiolytics, muscle relaxants, and hypnotics (8,9). No single agent has demonstrated consistent efficacy across all symptom domains (9). While some interventions offer benefits for some patients, additional treatment options are needed for patients with FMS in whom currently available treatments are either ineffective or poorly tolerated.

Pregabalin is an \(\alpha_2\)-\(\delta\) ligand that has analgesic, anxiolytic-like, and anticonvulsant activity in animal models. Biochemical studies identified \(\alpha_2\)-\(\delta\) (type 1) as the primary binding site for both pregabalin and the related compound, gabapentin (10). Alpha2-delta is an auxiliary protein associated with voltage-gated calcium channels. Although there are 4 subtypes of \(\alpha_2\)-\(\delta\) proteins, pregabalin and gabapentin bind with high affinity only to subtypes 1 and 2 (11,12). The experimental coexpression of \(\alpha_2\)-\(\delta\) with various types of calcium channel \(\alpha_1\) subunits (the pore-forming protein of calcium channels) causes greater cellular expression of calcium channels and alters the kinetics and voltage dependence of calcium currents (13,14).

The pharmacologic actions of pregabalin appear to be restricted to neurons; for example, pregabalin has no effect on blood pressure or heart rate even at high dosages in animal models, unlike the vascular calcium channel blockers. Potent binding of pregabalin at the \(\alpha_2\)-\(\delta\) site reduces calcium influx at nerve terminals (15) and, therefore, reduces the release of several neurochemicals, including glutamate, noradrenaline, and substance P (15–18). The reduced neurotransmitter release caused by drug binding at the \(\alpha_2\)-\(\delta\) site is presumed to account for the analgesic, anticonvulsant, and anxiolytic-like actions of pregabalin in animal models. This conclusion is based on results of structure–activity studies of compounds related to pregabalin and on the reduced pharmacologic effects of pregabalin in a mutant mouse strain that has reduced affinity for drug binding to \(\alpha_2\)-\(\delta\) type 1 protein (19).

Reduction of neurotransmitter release from neurons in the spinal cord and brain is also proposed as the mechanism of action that may result in clinical benefit for patients with FMS. Pregabalin is inactive at \(\gamma\)-aminobutyric acid (GABA)\(_A\) and GABA\(_B\) receptors, it is not converted metabolically into GABA\(_A\) or a GABA\(_B\) antagonist, and it does not block GABA uptake or alter GABA degradation (20). It has no effect on whole-tissue GABA concentrations in the rat brain (21). Pregabalin has a predictable and linear pharmacokinetic profile with ready access to neural tissue, no known drug interactions, and a rapid onset of action (22,23). It has been found to be safe and effective in patients with painful diabetic neuropathy and postherpetic neuralgia (24–26).

The objective of the present 8-week study was to determine whether pregabalin (150, 300, or 450 mg/day) would be efficacious in reducing the severity of pain in patients with FMS. Also to be examined were the effects of this treatment on sleep, on other typical FMS symptoms, and on health-related quality of life.

**PATIENTS AND METHODS**

**Patients.** Men or women age \(\geq 18\) years who met the ACR criteria for the diagnosis of FMS (2) were eligible to enter the study. They were required to have a score of \(\geq 40\) mm on the 100-mm visual analog scale (VAS) of the Short-Form McGill Pain Questionnaire (SF-MPQ) (27) at screening and randomization. They were also required to have a mean score of \(\geq 4\) on a 0–10 pain rating scale, based on at least 4 daily pain diary entries, during the week before randomization. Subjects with a calculated creatinine clearance rate of \(\leq 60\) ml/minute (Cockroft-Gault equation) were specifically excluded. Those who had failed to respond to previous treatment with gabapentin at dosages \(\geq 1,200\) mg/day for pain associated with FMS were excluded. Women were not pregnant or breastfeeding during the study, and all women of child-bearing potential were advised to use contraception reliably. Patients who were receiving disability, applying for disability, or engaged in litigation related to FMS were
excluded from the study. All patients gave written, informed consent.

**Study design and treatment.** This randomized, double-blind, parallel-group study was conducted between September 1999 and April 2000 at 40 study centers in the US. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and received local or central institutional review board approval. The sponsor conducted the study, and clinical laboratory test results were analyzed at the Mayo Medical Laboratory (Rochester, MN).

Patients were randomly assigned to receive either placebo or pregabalin at 150, 300, or 450 mg/day. Study medication was administered 3 times daily in equal doses for 8 weeks. Randomization was by computer-generated code using a block size of 8. Patients randomly assigned to receive 450 mg/day pregabalin received 300 mg/day for the first 3 days and then 450 mg/day thereafter. Patients were required to attend the clinic at screening, randomization (baseline), and weeks 1, then 450 mg/day thereafter. Patients were required to discontinue skeletal muscle relaxants, antidepressants, antiepileptic agents, corticosteroids, benzodiazepines, opioid analgesics, tramadol, mexiletine, and anti–Parkinson’s disease medications 7 days before the study and tender point site injections and fluoxetine 30 days before the study. Patients were instructed to maintain their normal daily routines and not to alter their exercise regimens.

**Efficacy assessments.** Each morning, patients rated the intensity of their FMS pain during the prior 24 hours in a daily paper diary, using an 11-point numerical rating scale where 0 = no pain and 10 = worst possible pain. They also rated sleep quality during the prior 24 hours in a daily diary as 0 = best possible sleep and 10 = worst possible sleep. To more fully describe core symptoms associated with FMS, a number of secondary measures were used. Patients completed the SF-MPQ at screening, randomization, and weeks 1, 3, 5, and 8. The Medical Outcomes Study (MOS)–Sleep measure (28), the Multidimensional Assessment of Fatigue (MAF) (29), the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) (30), and the Short Form 36 Health Survey (SF-36) (31) were completed at baseline and end point. The Patient Global Impression of Change (PGIC) and Clinical Global Impression of Change (CGIC) were rated at end point on a scale from very much improved to very much worse. The Manual Tender Point Survey (MTPS) (32) was administered by a clinician at randomization and end point.

**Tolerability and safety assessments.** All spontaneously reported or observed treatment-emergent adverse events were recorded at each clinic visit, along with the dates on which they began and ended. The sponsor classified adverse events using Coding Symbols for a Thesaurus of Adverse Reaction Terms, 4th Edition (COSTART IV) (33). A 12-lead electrocardiogram was recorded at screening and end point, and clinical laboratory tests (hematology, urinalysis, and chemistry) were performed at screening, week 3, and end point.

**Statistical analysis.** The primary efficacy variable was the mean pain score at end point (derived from daily pain diaries), defined as the mean of the last 7 diary entries while the patient was receiving study medication. All other efficacy variables were secondary. All patients who received at least 1 dose of study medication were included in the intent-to-treat analysis. End point analyses were based on the last observation carried forward. Data were not imputed for patients with no postbaseline data for a given variable; rather, such patients were treated as missing in the analysis. The mean pain score and mean sleep quality score from the daily diaries, as well as SF-MPQ, FMS intensity from the MTPS, MAF, MOS–Sleep measure, HADS, and SF-36 scores in each of the pregabalin groups were compared with those in the placebo group using

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**Table 1.** Baseline characteristics of the patients*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Placebo</th>
<th>Pregabalin 150 mg/day</th>
<th>Pregabalin 300 mg/day</th>
<th>Pregabalin 450 mg/day</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 131)</td>
<td>(n = 132)</td>
<td>(n = 134)</td>
<td>(n = 132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age, years</td>
<td>49.7 ± 10.7</td>
<td>48.0 ± 10.4</td>
<td>47.7 ± 10.1</td>
<td>48.9 ± 11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women, no. (%)</td>
<td>119 (90.8)</td>
<td>126 (95.5)</td>
<td>120 (89.6)</td>
<td>119 (90.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>White, no. (%)</td>
<td>125 (95.4)</td>
<td>123 (93.2)</td>
<td>123 (91.8)</td>
<td>122 (92.4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weight, kg</td>
<td>77.32 ± 18.07</td>
<td>76.71 ± 18.04</td>
<td>83.62 ± 20.99</td>
<td>80.49 ± 19.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibromyalgia duration, months</td>
<td>103.7 ± 89.4</td>
<td>102.3 ± 101.1</td>
<td>109.8 ± 97.4</td>
<td>114.8 ± 113.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain score†</td>
<td>6.9 ± 1.2</td>
<td>6.9 ± 1.5</td>
<td>7.3 ± 1.2</td>
<td>7.0 ± 1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Except where indicated otherwise, values are the mean ± SD.
† Based on daily diary entries recording pain on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain).
analysis of covariance, with treatment and center as the main effects and the baseline value as the covariate. In each analysis, adjusted (least squares) means were obtained from the model, and 95% confidence intervals on the difference in least squares means between each dosage of pregabalin and placebo were constructed.

The proportion of responders, defined as patients with \( \geq 50\% \) reduction in mean pain score from baseline to end point, was analyzed using the Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel test (34) to test for an association between treatment and response after adjusting for center. The PGIC and CGIC were analyzed using the Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel test with modified ridit scores, which do not assume equal spacing between PGIC or CGIC response categories, adjusting for center (34). All statistical testing was 2-sided and was performed using SAS procedures (35). Because there were 3 principal comparisons (150, 300, and 450 mg/day pregabalin versus placebo), the Hochberg procedure (36), a modification of the Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons, was used to confine the Type I error rate to 5%.

Table 2. Numbers of patients in each of the treatment groups at each week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregabalin, mg/day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>98</td>
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<td>300</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>107</td>
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<td>450</td>
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<td>110</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESULTS

Characteristics of patients who continued and those who withdrew from treatment. Of the 825 patients who were screened, 530 were randomized and 529 took at least 1 dose of study medication (Figure 1). The majority of screening failures were due to the inability of subjects to meet inclusion and exclusion criteria, particularly the inability to discontinue concurrent medications. Baseline characteristics were similar across treatment groups (Table 1). Most patients were women, of whom 59% were postmenopausal, and most were white. The mean duration of FMS was ~9 years, with 61% of patients having been diagnosed at least 5 years earlier. The prevalence of irritable bowel syndrome was 30%. More than half of the patients had normal or mild categories of depressive and anxiety symptoms on the HADS. Patients were categorized as having moderate (28%) or severe (17%) anxiety more frequently than moderate (22%) or severe (9%) depression.

A total of 410 patients (77.5%) completed the 8-week study (Figure 1). Fewer patients in the 450 mg/day (6%) and 300 mg/day (4%) pregabalin groups withdrew due to lack of efficacy, compared with the 150 mg/day pregabalin (9%) and placebo (14%) groups. Adverse events prompted withdrawal of 17 patients (13%), 10 patients (7%), and 11 patients (8%) from the 450, 300, and 150 mg/day pregabalin groups, respectively, and of 10 patients (8%) from the placebo group.

Efficacy. In the primary efficacy analysis, the end point mean pain score was statistically significantly lower in the 450 mg/day pregabalin group than in the placebo group (–0.93; P = 0.0009) (Figure 2A). The end point scores in the 150 and 300 mg/day pregabalin groups were not significantly different from those in the placebo group. In the analysis of weekly mean pain scores, a statistically significant improvement in the 450 mg/day pregabalin group was apparent at week 1 and was maintained through week 7 relative to the placebo group (–1.2, –0.9, –0.9, –1.2, –0.8, and –0.8; P < 0.05) (Figure 2A). However, there was no statistically significant difference from placebo at week 8. A statistically significant improvement was observed in the 150 mg/day pregabalin group at weeks 1 and 2 relative to the placebo group (–0.4 at each time point; P < 0.05) and in the 300 mg/day pregabalin group from week 1 through week 5 relative to the placebo group (–0.9, –0.6, –0.6, –0.6, and –0.7; P < 0.05). The numbers of patients in each of the treatment groups at each week are shown in Table 2.

The proportion of patients classified as responders (prespecified as having ≥50% improvement from baseline) at end point was significantly greater in the 450 mg/day pregabalin group (28.9%) (P = 0.003), but not in the 300 (18.9%) or 150 (13.0%) mg/day pregabalin groups, compared with the placebo group (13.2%) (Figure 3). Using a less stringent difference of 30% improvement from baseline, previously shown to be a clinically meaningful 30% reduction in mean pain scores from baseline and the clinically meaningful 50% reduction in mean pain scores from baseline are shown by the vertical lines.

The mean SF-MPQ VAS, total, sensory, and affective scores in the 450 mg/day pregabalin group were statistically significantly improved at end point compared with those in the placebo group (–11.1, –4.0, –3.2, and –0.8, respectively; all P < 0.05), but the SF-MPQ present pain intensity score was not. The mean FMS intensity scores from the MTPS in the pregabalin groups were not significantly improved compared with that in the placebo group, although the difference approached significance in the 300 and 450 mg/day pregabalin groups (–0.5 at both dosages; P = 0.052) (Table 3).

The mean sleep quality scores improved signifi-
Significantly in the 300 and 450 mg/day pregabalin groups at end point relative to that in the placebo group (−0.6 [P = 0.0348] and −1.3 [P = 0.0003], respectively). All 3 pregabalin dosages were associated with statistically significant improvements at various time points during the study (Figure 2B). Several of the scales of the MOS–Sleep measure showed statistically significant improvements, including the sleep problems index for all 3 pregabalin groups (150, 300, and 450 mg/day) at end point compared with placebo (8.5, 8.9, and −13.7, respectively; all P < 0.001). Significant improvements in the MAF global fatigue index scores were observed in the 300 and 450 mg/day pregabalin groups relative to that in the placebo group (−3.5 and −3.4, respectively; both P = 0.019). The HADS anxiety and depression scores were not significantly improved with pregabalin at any dosage (Table 3).

Pregabalin at 450 mg/day improved health-related quality of life, and end point scores were statistically significantly superior to those in the placebo group in the social functioning, bodily pain, vitality, and general health perception domains of the SF-36 (differences of 7.6, 7.6, 6.7, and 5.0, respectively; all P < 0.05) (Table 3). Pregabalin at 150 and 300 mg/day was also associated with significantly improved end point scores in general health perception compared with placebo (differences of 4.6 and 5.9, respectively; both P < 0.05). The proportion of patients who were much or very much improved on the PGIC compared with baseline was 52% for those taking 450 mg/day pregabalin, 45% for those taking 300 mg/day pregabalin, and 32% for those taking 150 mg/day pregabalin, compared with 26% for those taking placebo. The proportion of patients who were much or very much improved on the CGIC compared with baseline was 52% for those taking 450 mg/day pregabalin, 41% for those taking 300 mg/day pregabalin, and 33% for those taking 150 mg/day pregabalin, compared with 25% for those taking placebo.

### Table 3. Baseline and end point ANCOVA values for outcome measures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter, scale</th>
<th>Overall mean at baseline†</th>
<th>Placebo</th>
<th>Pregabalin 150 mg/day</th>
<th>Pregabalin 300 mg/day</th>
<th>Pregabalin 450 mg/day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pain diary, 0–10</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>129 5.88</td>
<td>131 5.74</td>
<td>132 5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF-MPQ VAS, 0–100 mm</td>
<td></td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>131 60.63</td>
<td>132 58.83</td>
<td>131 55.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPI, 0–5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>131 2.15</td>
<td>132 2.16</td>
<td>131 1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory, 0–33</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>131 14.77</td>
<td>132 13.88</td>
<td>131 13.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective, 0–12</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>131 3.71</td>
<td>132 3.49</td>
<td>131 3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total, 0–45</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>131 18.50</td>
<td>132 17.38</td>
<td>131 16.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMS intensity score, 0–10</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>123 5.17</td>
<td>123 5.05</td>
<td>127 4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep quality diary, 0–10</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>129 5.30</td>
<td>131 4.91</td>
<td>132 4.68‡</td>
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<td>MOS–Sleep problems index, 0–100</td>
<td></td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>121 54.16</td>
<td>123 45.66‡</td>
<td>123 45.26‡</td>
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<td>MAF global fatigue index, 1–50</td>
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<td>38.8</td>
<td>122 32.85</td>
<td>125 30.67</td>
<td>126 29.37‡</td>
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<tr>
<td>HADS, 0–21</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>125 8.41</td>
<td>124 8.35</td>
<td>127 8.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>125 7.41</td>
<td>124 6.82</td>
<td>126 7.23</td>
<td>126 6.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF-36, 0–100</td>
<td>Physical functioning</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>125 46.14</td>
<td>124 48.21</td>
<td>126 48.66</td>
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<td>Role-physical</td>
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<td>125 23.08</td>
<td>124 28.22</td>
<td>127 31.07</td>
<td>127 32.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social functioning</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>125 56.73</td>
<td>124 62.30</td>
<td>127 61.20</td>
<td>127 64.31§</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bodily pain</td>
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<td>124 38.41</td>
<td>126 40.19</td>
<td>127 42.96§</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>125 64.46</td>
<td>124 66.29</td>
<td>127 63.80</td>
<td>127 67.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-emotional</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>125 58.90</td>
<td>124 64.28</td>
<td>127 52.21</td>
<td>127 65.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitality</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>125 26.90</td>
<td>124 31.94</td>
<td>127 32.14</td>
<td>127 33.56§</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General health</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>124 49.34</td>
<td>123 53.89¶</td>
<td>127 55.28§</td>
<td>127 54.38¶</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Lower numbers suggest improvement for all parameters except the Short Form 36 Health Survey (SF-36), for which higher numbers suggest improvement. ANCOVA = analysis of covariance; LSM = least squares mean; SF-MPQ = Short-Form McGill Pain Questionnaire; VAS = visual analog scale; PPI = present pain intensity; FMS intensity score = fibromyalgia syndrome intensity score from the Manual Tender Point Survey; MOS = Medical Outcomes Study; MAF = Multidimensional Assessment of Fatigue; HADS = Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale.

† Baseline values are based on all patients included in each analysis.

‡ P ≤ 0.001 versus placebo (Hochberg-adjusted for 3-dose comparisons).

§ P ≤ 0.01 versus placebo (Hochberg-adjusted for 3-dose comparisons).

¶ P ≤ 0.05 versus placebo (Hochberg-adjusted for 3-dose comparisons).
Tolerability and safety. Treatment-emergent adverse events were reported by most patients in each group (78%, 88%, and 92% of patients in the 150, 300, and 450 mg/day pregabalin groups, respectively, and 77% of patients in the placebo group). Most adverse events were mild or moderate. Dizziness and somnolence were the two most frequently reported adverse events and tended to be dose related across pregabalin groups (Table 4). The median time to onset for dizziness and somnolence was 1 day in all 4 groups. The median duration of dizziness in patients who did not withdraw from the study was 4 days in those taking 150 mg/day pregabalin, 6 days in those taking 300 mg/day pregabalin, and 15 days in those taking 450 mg/day pregabalin. The median duration of dizziness in patients who did not withdraw from the study was 31 days in those taking 150 mg/day pregabalin, 21 days in those taking 300 mg/day pregabalin, and 18 days in those taking 450 mg/day pregabalin. Dizziness led to the withdrawal of 1 patient in the placebo group and of 2, 4, and 5 patients in the 150, 300, and 450 mg/day pregabalin groups, respectively. Somnolence led to the withdrawal of 2, 3, and 5 patients in the 150, 300, and 450 mg/day pregabalin groups, respectively.

Non-central nervous system (CNS) events that were more frequent in the pregabalin groups included weight gain and peripheral edema. No patient withdrew due to weight gain, and peripheral edema led to the withdrawal of 1 patient from the 450 mg/day pregabalin group. While the mechanism of pregabalin-induced peripheral edema is unclear, no changes in cardiovascular or renal function were seen in patients who developed peripheral edema. There were no clinically important findings in the analyses of hematology, blood chemistry, or urine. Similarly, there were no clinically significant findings in the visual function, physical, or neurologic examinations or on the electrocardiograms.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrated that 450 mg/day pregabalin as monotherapy is efficacious in relieving pain in patients with FMS. In addition, pregabalin is associated with decreased fatigue and with improved sleep and health-related quality of life. Patients enrolled in this study were primarily women with a long history of FMS who had substantial symptomatic complaints and diminished health-related quality of life. The baseline assessments demonstrated that this patient population was similar to those in other studies of patients with FMS (32,38,39).

Pregabalin at 450 mg/day was statistically significantly more efficacious than placebo in the primary and secondary analyses of pain. Similar results were obtained when the data were analyzed for the female subjects only. The efficacy of 450 mg/day pregabalin was apparent as early as the first week of treatment and persisted through week 7. The loss of a statistically
significant reduction of pain at week 8 could potentially have resulted from many different factors, including reduced statistical power at later time points, comparison with a group likely to comprise many placebo responders, a lack of durability of analgesic effect, or symptom fluctuation. However, since the study ended at week 8, it is not possible to distinguish between these possibilities. Clearly, longer studies are required.

Clinical significance of the treatment effect can be assessed using responder analysis and PGIC. Significantly more patients in the 450 mg/day pregabalin group (29%) had a ≥50% decrease in pain ratings between baseline and end point than did patients in the placebo group (13%). It has been demonstrated that a 30% reduction in pain intensity represents a clinically meaningful change using the daily numerical rating scale for pain intensity as employed in this and other pain studies (37), and 48% of patients in the 450 mg/day pregabalin group achieved this level of reduction in pain intensity. Pregabalin at 150 and 300 mg/day was not statistically significantly more efficacious than placebo in the primary analysis of pain, but statistically significant improvement was observed at some time points during the study in both groups. The global change assessments by patients and clinicians indicated significantly greater improvement in patients taking 300 and 450 mg/day pregabalin than in those taking placebo. The MTPS did not demonstrate statistically significant improvement in several clinical trials (42,43). As such, it is possible that improvements in pain scores reported by patients could be a by-product of a positive anxiolytic effect. However, in the present trial, there were no significant changes in HADS anxiety scores at end point from those at baseline. This suggests that patient-reported changes in pain scores are not a product of improvements in symptoms of anxiety; rather, improvements in pain scores are independent of anxiety symptom status.

Since patients were required to discontinue anti-depressants, the study population could represent a group of FMS patients with less severe mood disturbance. The rates of depressive symptoms in the final study population defined by the baseline HADS depression score (9% with severe depression, 22% with moderate depression) were consistent with those previously reported in patients with FMS (39). Nevertheless, mean baseline HADS scores were mild, thus limiting the scope for significant improvement.

Pregabalin was generally well tolerated. The rate of discontinuation due to adverse events was low in the pregabalin and placebo groups. The most frequently reported adverse events were CNS-related dizziness and somnolence, which tended to occur within a day or two of initiation of pregabalin treatment. Few patients withdrew due to these symptoms, and 78.4% of patients from all treatment groups (76% of the placebo group, 78% of the 150 mg/day pregabalin group, 84% of the 300 mg/day pregabalin group, and 76% of the 450 mg/day pregabalin group) entered the open-label extension, suggesting that patients tolerate these adverse events even though they
are common. Patients taking pregabalin also experienced a higher incidence of peripheral edema than those taking placebo, although the mechanism of pregabalin-induced peripheral edema is unclear.

In summary, this study is the first prospective, randomized trial to evaluate pregabalin in the treatment of FMS. The results demonstrated that this agent reduces the pain and other core symptoms of the syndrome, including fatigue and sleep disturbance, over an 8-week period. Furthermore, pregabalin monotherapy was effective in improving health-related quality of life for patients with longstanding FMS. The data presented in this report suggest that pregabalin provides clinically significant benefits in patients with FMS, and these data support further study of this agent for treatment of patients with this prevalent and often disabling syndrome.

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