



ANXIETY

The Realities of Panic Disorder

Clinical trials for treatment of panic disorder (PD) may be more generalizable in clinical practice if exclusion criteria were reconsidered, suggest researchers from Hôpital Louis Mourier, Université Paris Descartes, Université Paris Diderot, and Hôpital Corentin-Celton, all in Paris, France. Their study found overly restrictive eligibility requirements could mean as many as 80% of people with PD are excluded from trials. That raises the question: Can results from such trials be generalized to patients in real life?

Using data from 43,093 adults in the National Epidemiological Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions, the researchers applied a standard set of eligibility criteria to 907 adults with PD in the past 12 months and to a subgroup of 105 participants seeking treatment.

The researchers determined that for a typical efficacy trial, > 8 of 10 participants with PD were excluded by at least 1 criterion, and > 9 of 10 in the treatment-seeking subsample would also have been excluded by at least 1 criterion. Depression and alcohol or drug abuse/dependence were the usual reasons for exclusion. A lifetime history of bipolar disorder and a current significant medical

condition also ruled out a substantial proportion of patients in both samples.

Excluding patients who have depression or who misuse or abuse drugs or alcohol may be “particularly significant,” the researchers say, given that those problems are very common among patients with PD. While the use of more restrictive criteria may be appropriate in early efficacy trials, they charge, clinical trials should “carefully consider the trade-offs between the application of each exclusion criterion and its impact on generalizability.” ●

Source: Hoertel N, Le Strat Y, De Maricourt P, Limosin F, Dubertret C. *J Affect Disord.* 2013;146(3):383-389. doi: 10.1016/j.jad.2012.09.023.