Dear Committee

The purpose of this communication is to present the importance of including tramadol in all its presentations in the list of essential drugs.

Moderate to severe, acute, chronic, cancer and non-cancer pain is considered a public health problem worldwide, causing great deterioration in the quality of life of patients. Many efforts have been made to improve the availability of controlled drugs for pain relief and to prevent abuse, but this has not been achieved.

Opioid analgesics, which are the drugs of choice for the management of moderate to severe acute and chronic pain, are often not available by the policies and laws that regulate excessively restrictive controlled drugs. Some data indicate that Latin America (LA) consumes less than 3% of the opioids consumed globally and the consumption of opioid drugs in the countries of South America is 10 times lower than the global average. The average consumption of opioids in Central America and the Caribbean is almost 20 times lower than the world average.

There are many reasons for this situation, one of which is the opiophobia of health professionals for misconceptions and the fear of doctors prescribing opioids for potential abuse and misperception of the lack of efficacy.

On the other hand, the excessive restriction of the strong opioids by the governments, not allowing an adequate availability, nor accessibility of the medicines to all the population that requires it.

Finally, the fear of patients and their relatives to the use of opioid drugs for fear of addiction and the ill-founded secondary effects in many opportunities.

For this reason, perhaps one of the most used opioids with fewer restrictions and fears on the part of the health system, doctors and general population is tramadol.
Tramadol is an analgesic with atypical central action, because it has mixed effects as opioid agonist and monoaminergic drug. Complementary and synergistic actions improve the analgesic efficacy and the tolerability profile with a double mechanism of action that confer special characteristics for patients with moderate to severe acute and chronic pain at any time of the pain producing disease.

Among the advantages of the medicine are:

- Administration by oral, sublingual, parenteral (intravenous, intramuscular, subcutaneous).
- Variable duration of action according to your presentation
- Useful as a rescue medicine
- Greater patient comfort and better compliance with therapy.
- Less chance of respiratory depression than the rest of the opioid drugs, giving great security to the elderly patients
- Potency and efficacy similar to other weak opioids
- Can be combined with other adjuvants to improve analgesic effect
- It can even be combined with potent opioids according to new research.
- Useful in nociceptive pain, neuropathic, oncological and non-oncological pain and in postoperative pain and acute pain.
- Tramadol has a very low potential for abuse, with addiction and physical dependence rates of less than 1 per 100,000 exposed patients.
- Does not require special recipe and has very few restrictions for its use in Latin America
- In almost all countries it is available in all pharmacies nationwide, making it accessible and available to all the population that requires it.

For all of the above characteristics, tramadol is ideal in patients with acute, chronic non-oncologic or cancer pain, with moderate to severe pain. In addition, because of their characteristics, health professionals treat it with less restrictions than potent opioids. The patients considered is a drug with few side effects compared to strong opioids, so they more easily accept its use, and pharmacists are not as restrictive as with the dispensing of strong opioids.

These qualities allow to control the moderate pain and in some cases the severe pain of the patients in LA.

In Venezuela, fortunately there has been an increase in the number of specialists in palliative medicine and pain control, in addition to greater awareness on the part of members of the health team, the patient and the community, the need for adequate pain control to reduce suffering, improving quality of life. However we currently only have tramadol and there is no strong oral opioid or patches, we only have availability of parenteral morphine in very few quantities, So our only tool for pain control and relief of suffering is tramadol alone or combined with parenteral morphine and / or adjuvants.
For all of the above reasons, I recommend its use and inclusion in WHO’s list of essential medicines, indispensable for the adequate control of acute, chronic oncological and non-oncological pain.

I say goodbye cordially,

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me,

Respectfully,

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