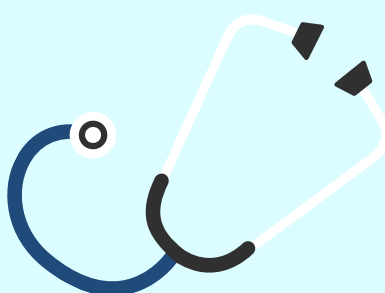


# IAFP BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PICO DE POEM



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## One Third of Patients with Anxiety Disorder will Relapse When Antidepressant Treatment Stops

### PRESENTING QUESTION

How common is relapse in patients with anxiety disorder following the discontinuation of treatment with an antidepressant?

### STUDY DESIGN

Meta-analysis (randomized controlled trials)

### FUNDING SOURCE

Self-funded or unfunded

### SYNOPSIS

The authors searched 3 databases, including PubMed, Cochrane, and Embase, as well as clinical trial registries, to identify published and unpublished studies of patients with "panic disorder, agoraphobia, social phobia, generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder", post-traumatic stress disorder, or a specific phobia who responded to antidepressant treatment and were subsequently selected for randomized trials to either continue long-term antidepressant treatment or be switched to placebo.

Two researchers independently selected research for inclusion, extracted data, and evaluated study quality. The 24 published and 4 unpublished included studies involved a total of 5233 patients (2625 in the antidepressant group and 2608 in the placebo group), and followed them for 8 weeks to 52 weeks.

Discontinuation of antidepressant treatment resulted in higher relapse rates of 36.4 % compared with the 16.4% of treatment continuation (odds ratio 3.11; 95% CI 2.48 - 3.89). There was no significant difference in relapse rates based on "type of anxiety, duration of previous treatment, duration of follow-up, mode of discontinuation, or concurrent psychotherapy". The rate of relapse varied across the studies (hazard ratio 3.63, 95% CI 2.58 - 5.10), likely due to the different durations of follow-up. Pharmaceutical companies were involved in all but 2 of the studies and 6 were previously unpublished of which two could not be included due to lack of data; additional unpublished studies were identified but data could not be obtained, increasing the risk of publication bias.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

Discontinuing of antidepressant treatment in patients with anxiety disorders results in relapse in approximately one-third of patients. However, approximately 1 in 6 patients previously treated successfully will also relapse despite continued treatment. Regardless, there is a clear benefit of continuing treatment up to one year for both relapse rate and time to relapse.

Designed by Sreedivya Veturi, 2020-2021 IAFP Public Health Extern

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Batelaan NM, Bosman RC, Muntingh A, Scholten WD, Huijbregts KM, van Balkom AJLM. Risk of relapse after antidepressant discontinuation in anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder: systematic review and meta-analysis of relapse prevention trials. *BMJ* 2017 Sep 13;358:j3927

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