CLINICAL PRESENTATION

- Octogenarian patient presented with aggravation of anxiety symptoms
- Trigger: ophthalmological surgery
- Progressive augmentation of alprazolam (from 0 to 0.75 mg daily)
- Visit in the psychiatric emergency room
- Abrupt interruption of alprazolam and switch for clomethiazole
  - Abrupt worsening of anxiety symptoms and withdrawal symptoms
  - Appearance of new symptom: increased sexual function
  - Improvement of anxiety and withdrawal symptoms after resumption of alprazolam
  - Remaining of increased sexual function even after resumption of alprazolam
  - Disappearance of increased sexual function after interruption of clomethiazole
- Diagnosis of major depressive episode of moderate severity
  - Introduction of trazodone and further increase up to 150 mg daily
  - Psychogeriatric hospitalization due to important anxiety symptoms
  - Progressive reduction and further interruption of alprazolam
  - No increase in sexual function after interruption of clomethiazole nor alprazolam

WHAT IS CLOMETHIAZOLE

- Widely prescribed in French-speaking Switzerland
- Rarely prescribed elsewhere
- Sedative-hypnotic, short-acting, anticonvulsant properties
- Structurally close to thiazole component of Vit B1
- Mechanism of action similar to barbiturates
- Treatment of anxiety and insomnia in the elderly

DISCUSSION

- Difficult to establish association between drug use and adverse drug reaction (ADR)
- Temporal pattern regarding medication seen as a relevant factor
  - In our case:
    - The patient had not taken clomethiazole any time before
    - Increased sexual function appeared right after introduction of clomethiazole
    - Increased sexual function did not improve after resumption of alprazolam
    - Increased sexual function disappeared after interruption of clomethiazole
  - However:
    - Alprazolam was interrupted around the same time as the ADR appeared
    - Increased sexual function is not typical of withdrawal syndrome, but has been described
    - Increased sexual function has not yet been described as a possible ADR for clomethiazole
    - Possible ADR include paradoxical excitation and confusion

CONCLUSION

- Increased sexual function was likely an ADR of clomethiazole
- However, association with alprazolam interruption cannot be excluded

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Figure 1. Clinical timeline illustrating the evolution of the patient's anxiety and sexual symptoms and correlating the progression of those with the medication that she was taking at each timepoint.