

Ketamine in the Treatment of Fear of Harm

In the past few years there has been a lot of talk in the media about the promising use of the medication ketamine in treating depression, anxiety, and post traumatic stress disorder. What many people don't know is ketamine is not a new medication, in fact it's a very well known and *very safe* medication.

Ketamine has been on the World Health Organization's list of most essential medications for decades. This list contains the medications the W H O considers to be the most effective and the safest medications that can be used to meet the most important healthcare needs world wide. The W H O even publishes a second list of essential medications specifically for children under the age of 12, outlining safe, effective, and cost effective medications for children. Ketamine is on that list too.

Ketamine was identified early on as a safe and effective medication to treat Fear of Harm because of its ability to reduce body temperature and to decrease fear sensitization. Early on in his research, Dr. Papolos and his research team found that intranasal ketamine significantly reduced mania, fear, aggression, and anxiety levels while significantly improving mood, attention, and executive functions.

Most importantly Fear of Harm's core symptom, thermodyregulation, showed *significant improvement*.

Ketamine treatment often shows at least *some positive effects* after the very first treatment, with feelings of relaxation, calm, and well-being occurring immediately upon administration of the first dose. Best of all, research shows that the benefits of ketamine continue, over time, needing only minor adjustments in dose, and once a therapeutic dose is reached, it is often possible to reduce or even eliminate other medications, such as antipsychotic medications and mood stabilizers, even though traditional medications for bipolar disorder continued to be taken.

JBRF sponsored research shows that ketamine works. Even better, it works over a long period of time, often allowing for some other medications to be reduced or eliminated.

As with any prescription or over the counter medication, vitamin, or supplement, there are some normal side effects you might expect to see. The vast majority of ketamine's

side effects are seen *only during the time it is being administered*, and are no longer present within 20 - 120 minutes. This means that once that time window is past these side effects won't linger, and provided that they are not extreme should not be cause for any alarm.

The normal side effects include:

- A mild slowing or slurring of speech.
- A reddening of the face as heat begins to dissipate.
- Mild dizziness which can cause mild instability when standing up quickly.
- Drowsiness.
- An urgent need to urinate.
- Relaxation, giddiness, or silliness.

Again, these are *normal side effects* that will likely happen in a mild and un-alarming way.

While ketamine is a safe and effective medication, we'd be remiss if we didn't address the concern that some people express about ketamine based on its reputation as a "club" or "party" drug. JBRF sponsored research shows that there is not only *no increase in substance use* in those prescribed ketamine for Fear of Harm, there was actually a downward trend, showing *frequency of use of alcohol and marijuana decreased while patients were receiving ketamine treatment*.

In truth, the benefits of taking intranasal ketamine are significant as evidenced by data showing that none of the patients who participated in our initial ketamine study were hospitalized in the 2 year period following beginning to take intranasal ketamine. This is true even for those who had been hospitalized prior, suggesting that intranasal ketamine may be a game changing medication, giving people the results they need to stay stable and build healthy and productive lives for themselves.