

The Truth About Neurotransmitter Testing

Some centers claim to offer a neurotransmitter test which is available to measure the levels of major neurotransmitters including serotonin, norepinephrine, epinephrine, GABA and dopamine. This testing can be done by urine, blood, or a spinal tap to measure neurotransmitter levels. However, only in rare cases is it necessary to do neurotransmitter testing. Even if we know the blood level of these neurotransmitters, and we find a neurotransmitter deficiency, it offers little help in guiding therapy since neurotransmitter levels and neurotransmitter production fluctuates easily from day to day and hour to hour. Neurotransmitter testing is not a reliable way to determine how a person will respond to a particular medicine or supplement.

Neurotransmitters are present in the central and peripheral nervous system, so the tests are not diagnostic, but are biomarkers. There are trends that show up consistently relating to certain symptoms or conditions. There is still a wide gap between testing for neurotransmitter levels and determining which form of therapy and in what dosage would work best. Neurotransmitter levels can be influenced on a daily basis by diet, activity level, sleep patterns, stress, and a number of factors. We are not convinced that testing for neurotransmitter levels adds to the clinical treatment of a patient. Often patients are misled to believe that they will be prescribed medication or have infusions of vitamins to correct this imbalance.

The simple treatment for *possibly* increasing these levels are just 'amino acids' which can easily be purchased at your local health/vitamin store. Along with this, a good daily multi vitamin certainly cannot hurt. Claims of these supplements or vitamin infusions helping with a drug addiction treatment would be minimal at best. The truth is they have not been proven to help with easing any withdrawal symptoms. If these tests were medically credible and the results could initiate sound medical treatment that would be beneficial, they would certainly be a routine test ordered by physicians.