

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT KETAMINE INFUSION THERAPY AT SHRINK SAVANNAH

WHAT IS KETAMINE?

Ketamine is a safe, effective anesthetic that has been in use worldwide since 1970 and has been listed on the World Health Organization's Essential Medicines list since 1985. Multiple studies and trials run at Mt. Sinai in New York, Yale and other prestigious universities and hospitals since 1990 have shown that ketamine is exceptionally effective in treating treatment-resistant depression, PTSD, anxiety, suicidal ideation, neuropathic pain and other related mood disorders. Unlike standard antidepressants like SSRIs and SNRIs which generally take 4 to 8 weeks to work (if they work at all), ketamine is fast-acting and can sometimes show immediate efficacy after a single intravenous dose. Because of its fast-acting nature, ketamine can be an extremely important tool in preventing suicide and immediately alleviating the suffering caused by major depressive disorder (MDD). More recently it has also been used to treat neuropathic pain and the symptoms of PTSD. The small doses and method of administration (intravenous infusion) used to treat depression patients differ greatly from those used in hospitals for anesthesia.

IS KETAMINE USED TO TREAT ALL PATIENTS WITH DEPRESSION?

No, mild to moderate depression is successfully treated by mental health professionals with drugs and psychotherapy. The treatment of severe depression is more difficult and requires a higher level of care, such as ECT, TMS, and now ketamine therapy. Ketamine infusion therapy is reserved for those patients with severe depression that is considered otherwise treatment resistant.

IS IT LIKELY THAT MY SEVERE DEPRESSION WILL RESPOND TO KETAMINE INFUSION THERAPY?

Patients we deem good candidates for ketamine infusion therapy are considered treatment resistant. That is, they have not responded to several antidepressant medications and in many cases have not responded to ECT or TMS. It is impossible to predict who will respond to ketamine, but statistically 2 out of 3 patients do show a dramatic improvement in their mood and 3 out of 4 will cease to have suicide ideation.

HOW MANY INFUSIONS WILL I NEED AND HOW LONG WILL I FEEL BETTER?

A total of six treatments is recommended within a two-week period. That will maximize the ketamine effect on new dendrite and synapse growth. Because there is no way to predict what your ongoing needs will be, we will treat each patient on a case-by-case basis to determine the right maintenance plan.

IF KETAMINE DOES WORK, WILL I BE ON IT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE?

No, right now ketamine infusion therapy is, perhaps, the most exciting and successful new treatment for severe depression. But, there are large pharmaceutical companies developing ketamine-like drugs for more convenient nasal and oral administration. It may be a few years, but those drugs will become available. In the meantime, ketamine infusion has been proven effective in most cases.

WILL I BE TREATED AS AN OUTPATIENT?

Yes, ketamine infusions for depression are outpatient procedures requiring no hospital admission.

HOW LONG DOES AN INFUSION TAKE?

About an hour, with an additional half hour before discharge.

WILL I BE ASLEEP?

No. The dose of ketamine you will receive does not cause any loss of consciousness.

WHAT WILL I EXPERIENCE DURING THE INFUSION?

Most patients experience a mild dissociation or inner reflective experience that is generally well tolerated. If you find it unpleasant we can treat it. Within 15 minutes of ending the infusion your thinking will be clear. There are no delayed "flashbacks."

ARE THERE ANY MEDICATIONS THAT WILL INTERFERE WITH KETAMINE TREATMENT?

Yes. Benzodiazepines, do interfere with ketamine. Please talk with your doctor or PA to discuss if and how to modify your existing medication regimen in order to maximize the ketamine's effectiveness.

WILL I BE REQUIRED TO STOP ALL OTHER ANTIDEPRESSANT MEDICATIONS THAT I AM TAKING?

No, there is no need to stop any anti-depressants that you are taking.

ARE THERE ANY MEDICAL CONDITIONS THAT WILL EXCLUDE ME FROM TREATMENT?

Almost none. Uncontrolled high blood pressure or heart failure should be addressed.

SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT ANY RISKS OR ADDICTION WITH KETAMINE THERAPY?

No, ketamine has been proven safe in humans over five decades in and out of hospitals and battle fields for surgical anesthesia and trauma management. Those patients experience longer exposures and at much higher doses than those used to treat severe depression. Although it has been abused recreationally in high doses as a "club drug", there is no evidence that ketamine is addictive.

DO I HAVE TO CHANGE PSYCHIATRISTS TO RECEIVE KETAMINE THERAPY?

No. Shrink Savannah welcomes patients from other providers. Upon completion of your ketamine therapy treatment, you will return to your regular provider for medication management and care.

WHAT IS THE COST?

The cost is \$400 per session / \$2400 for 6 rounds.
\$400 per follow up session.

WILL MY INSURANCE COVER THE TREATMENT?

Unfortunately, no. The treatment is currently not approved by the FDA therefore we are not able to file insurance claims for this treatment.