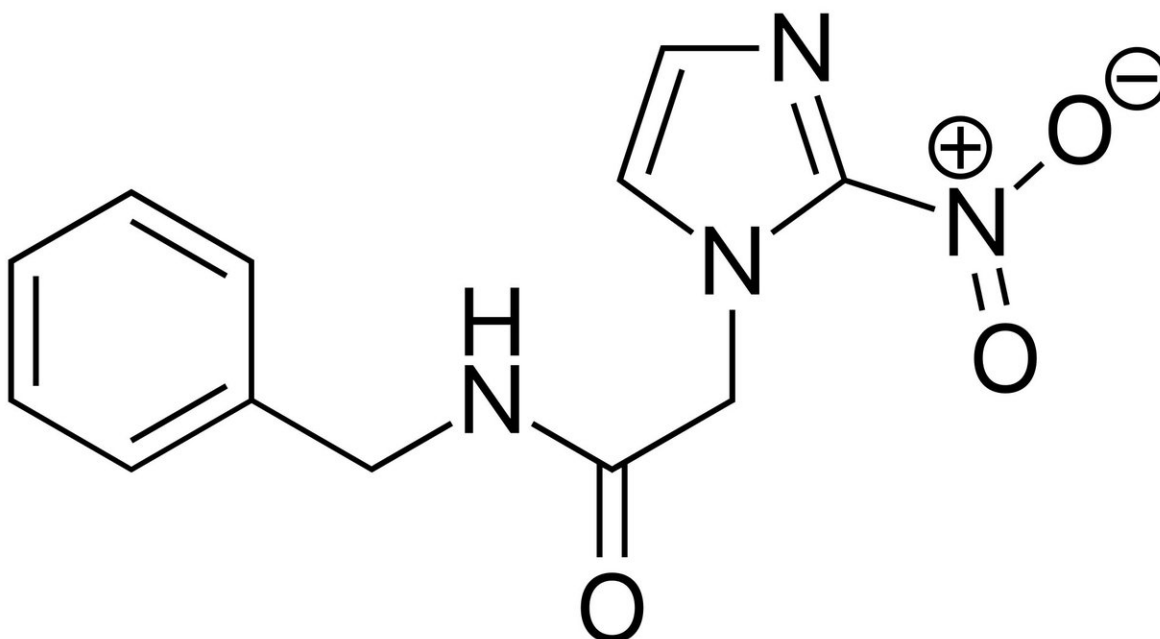


New safety data for the most commonly used drug to treat Chagas disease

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Skeletal formula of the most commonly used drug to treat Chagas Disease.
Credit: Fvasconcellos

The frequency of adverse reactions to benznidazole is high when treating chronic Chagas patients, although the effects were mostly mild, according to a study led by ISGlobal, in collaboration with the Hospital Clinic of Barcelona. The results point to the need for drug combinations or dosages that maintain efficacy but decrease toxicity.

Benznidazole is one of the two existing antiparasitic drugs for Chagas disease [treatment](#). However, it is a poorly tolerated drug, and its use to treat chronic disease raises [safety](#) concerns. Knowledge about its toxicity profile is scarce and mostly based on post-marketing observational studies.

In order to provide a systemic evaluation of safety of benznidazole in chronically infected adults, the authors of the study combined data from two prospective clinical trials performed in 2013 and 2016 at the Hospital Clinic of Barcelona, designed to assess the safety of the [drug](#) produced by ELEA Laboratories, Argentina. Adverse reactions were observed in 85 of the 99 participants, with an average of three [adverse reactions](#) per patient. Most adverse reactions (90 percent) were mild and appeared in the first month of treatment. The researchers also identified some unexpected adverse reactions that were not described previously, such as sleeping disorders and anxiety.

"These results confirm that, with the most widely used dosage and regimen, there is a high frequency of adverse reactions to benznidazole" says Maria Jesús Pinazo, ISGlobal researcher and study co-author. "Until we have something better, benznidazole will remain part of the treatment in the near future, so these results underline the urgent need to find ways to combine it with other drugs or use different dosages in order to achieve maximum efficacy with the minimum toxicity," she adds.

More information: E Aldasoro et al, What to expect and when: benznidazole toxicity in chronic Chagas' disease treatment, *Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy* (2017). [DOI: 10.1093/jac/dkx516](https://doi.org/10.1093/jac/dkx516)

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