Duloxetine is a selective serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor used for the treatment of major depression and fibromyalgia. Duloxetine-induced hyponatraemia is relatively rare and commonly occurs in elderly female patients. Hypocortisolaemia decreases sodium reuptake, which can sometimes cause hyponatraemia. In this article, we describe a case of severe hyponatraemia rapidly presenting after duloxetine treatment in a patient with hypocortisolaemia. To our knowledge, this is the first reported case of a patient with hyponatraemia induced by both duloxetine therapy and hypocortisolaemia. This case report is approved by the ethics committee of our hospital.

**Case History**

A 75-year-old male patient complaining of anorexia and with a history of hypertension, hyperuricemia, and hypocortisolaemia was referred to our hospital by his family physician. According to the information obtained from the patient and his family physician, he complained of anorexia 1 day before admission. His weight was 63 kg, and the medications he was taking just before admission included 2.5 mg/day amlodipine, 20 mg/day olmesartan, 200 mg/day allopurinol, 10 mg/day hydrocortisone, and 20 mg/day duloxetine. About 1 year before admission, an endocrinologist at our hospital introduced hydrocortisone replacement therapy for the treatment of hypocortisolaemia induced by a Rathke’s cleft cyst (RCC). According to his family physician, duloxetine was prescribed for lethargy 3 days before admission. His serum sodium level at admission was extremely low at 115 mEq/L (normal, 136–145). Other clinical laboratory findings showed a serum urea nitrogen level of 21.4 mg/dL (normal, 9.0–22.0), serum creatinine level.
of 1.06 mg/dL (normal, 0.5–1.1), serum osmolality of 242 mOsm/L (normal, 280–290), simultaneous urine osmolality of 585 mOsm/L (normal, 200–800), and urine sodium of 29 mEq/L (normal, less than 10). Endocrinological analyses revealed a 3.6-µg/dL (normal, 3.7–19.4) serum cortisol level and 2.0 pg/mL (normal, 7.2–63.3) serum adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH) level. According to his family physician, his serum sodium level 3 days before admission was 135 mEq/L. His other laboratory findings were within the normal range. Other than duloxetine, his medications were not modified. Based on laboratory reports, the syndrome of inappropriate secretion of antidiuretic hormone (SIADH) was diagnosed. Because we assumed that his hyponatremia was associated with both duloxetine and mild hypocortisolaemia, duloxetine was ceased. The severe hyponatremia was then treated with oral fluid restriction and oral furosemide (20 mg/day). According to the information obtained from the patient, he showed low adherence and skipped his hydrocortisone about 3 times/week. Therefore, we explained the importance of hydrocortisone replacement therapy to prevent the recurrence of hyponatremia. By the fourth day after admission, his hyponatremia had improved to 134 mEq/L, and serum and urine osmolality also improved. On the next day, oral fluid restriction and oral furosemide were discontinued because he did not complain of anorexia. By the 10th day after admission, his hypocortisolaemia improved to 4.5 µg/dL, whereas his serum ACTH remained low at 2.0 pg/mL [Table 1]. He was discharged the next day. Following discharge, the patient demonstrated high adherence to his hydrocortisone therapy. To date, medical examinations have shown no evidence of either symptomatic hyponatremia or hypocortisolaemia.

### Discussion

Although the mechanism contributing to duloxetine-related hyponatremia is unclear, duloxetine inhibits the reuptake of both serotonin and norepinephrine, which can stimulate ADH secretion.[4] Therefore, duloxetine-related hyponatremia is likely associated with SIADH, and laboratory findings on admission corresponded with the SIADH diagnostic criteria. Based on the Naranjo scale,[5] SIADH was likely related to duloxetine therapy (score 4). The risk factors for duloxetine-related hyponatremia include advanced age, female patients, lower body weight, lower baseline serum sodium, and treatment with medicines that can cause hyponatremia.[2] Recently, it has been reported that renal involvement of autoimmune diseases, such as Soren’s syndrome, could also be a risk factor for duloxetine-induced hyponatremia.[4] Our patient had two risk factors for duloxetine-related hyponatremia, including advanced age and lower baseline serum sodium. Because endocrinological analyses at admission revealed mild hypocortisolaemia at 3.6 µg/dL, the lower baseline serum sodium level might have been caused by mild hypocortisolaemia.

The mechanism underlying hyponatremia caused by hypocortisolaemia is probably related to the reduction in sodium reuptake. RCCs can cause pituitary dysfunction associated with a disrupted ACTH–cortisol axis. Given that cortisol promotes sodium reuptake in the collecting tubules,[6] hyponatremia is presumably caused by decreased sodium reuptake due to hypocortisolaemia. This evidence suggests that severe hyponatremia developed because of both duloxetine-induced SIADH and hypocortisolaemia through complementary and synergistic mechanisms. In our case, hypocortisolaemia is possibly due to low adherence to hydrocortisone replacement therapy. It has been reported that more than 50% of patients treated with pharmacotherapy for chronic diseases may have difficulty adhering to their pharmacotherapy for longer than 6 months.[7] Adherence to pharmacotherapy generally depends on the medical practitioner’s instructions.[8] Our patient was treated with hydrocortisone for about 1 year, and he showed good compliance with his hydrocortisone replacement therapy after receiving our instructions. Therefore, primary care physicians should confirm the adherence to hydrocortisone replacement therapy before duloxetine is initiated in patients treated with hydrocortisone. It has been reported that mirtazapine may have lower risk for hyponatremia when compared with other selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors.[9] If low adherence to hydrocortisone replacement therapy is suspected, pharmacists should provide pharmaceutical instructions to improve patient’s adherence, and primary care physicians should consider an alternative therapy with other antidepressants, such as mirtazapine.

This case highlights the development of severe hyponatremia rapidly presenting after duloxetine treatment in a patient with hypocortisolaemia due to low adherence to hydrocortisone replacement therapy. Therefore, this case suggests that both duloxetine-induced SIADH and hypocortisolaemia caused severe

### Table 1: Patient laboratory findings

| Events                  | Duloxetine started | Duloxetine discontinued |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Days after admission    | −3                 | 0                       |
| UOsm* (mOsm/L)          | Normal range       |                         |
| serum sodium (mEq/L)    | 136–145            | 135                     |
| SOsm† (mOsm/L)          | 280–290            | 242                     |
| UOsm† (mOsm/L)          | 200–800            | 585                     |
| U-Na‡ (mEq/L)           | <10                | 29                      |
| Serum cortisol (µg/dL)  | 3.7–19.4           | 3.6                     |
| Serum ACTH§ (pg/mL)     | 7.2–63.3           | 2.0                     |

*Serum osmolality, †Urine osmolality, ‡Urine sodium, §Adrenocorticotropic hormone
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To evaluate the risk of hyponatraemia, primary care physicians should confirm the adherence to hydrocortisone replacement therapy before duloxetine is initiated in patients receiving hydrocortisone therapy. If low adherence to hydrocortisone replacement therapy is suspected, primary care physicians should consider an alternative therapy with other antidepressants, such as mirtazapine.

Declaration of patient consent

The authors certify that they have obtained all appropriate patient consent forms. In the form the patient has given his consent for his clinical information to be reported in the journal. The patient understand that his name and initial will not be published and due efforts will be made to conceal his identity, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

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Key Messages

Our case suggests that both duloxetine-induced SIADH and hypocortisolaemia caused severe hyponatraemia through complementary and synergistic mechanisms. Careful attention should be paid to the potential risk of hyponatraemia when duloxetine is administered, particularly in patients with low adherence to hydrocortisone replacement therapy.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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