Enhancing Clinical Trial Outcomes for Idiopathic Hypersomnia:

Overcoming Challenges in Endpoint Determination and Protocol Design

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Introduction

Idiopathic Hypersomnia (IH) is a chronic neurological sleep disorder primarily characterized by excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS) that is unrelated to nighttime sleep quality or duration.

This whitepaper provides a comprehensive overview of clinical trial considerations for IH, covering diagnosis criteria, epidemiology, and pivotal endpoints used to assess therapeutic efficacy. It explores key challenges in endpoint determination, reviews FDA-approved treatments, and examines drug candidates that failed to reach approval, highlighting common pitfalls in trial design and execution. Safety concerns and their implications for trial protocols are analyzed, along with strategies to enhance clinical trial frameworks, ultimately aiming to advance therapeutic options for IH patients.

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Key Characteristics and Contributing Factors

Distinctive Characteristics

1. **Prolonged, non-refreshing sleep:** Individuals often sleep longer than average (sometimes exceeding 10-12 hours per night) but still experience persistent sleepiness during the day.
2. **Severe difficulty waking up (Sleep Inertia):** IH patients commonly report "sleep drunkenness," characterized by prolonged periods of confusion, grogginess, and an overwhelming desire to return to sleep.
3. **Unresponsiveness to typical stimulants:** Unlike narcolepsy, where short naps may alleviate symptoms temporarily, people with IH rarely experience symptom relief from brief rest. Moreover, they may respond poorly to traditional wakefulness-promoting treatments.
4. **Absence of cataplexy and REM-related disturbances:** IH is distinct from narcolepsy in that patients do not typically exhibit cataplexy (sudden muscle weakness) or abnormal REM sleep patterns, such as sleep paralysis or hypnagogic hallucinations.

Contributing Factors

Biological Factors:

- **GABAergic System Dysregulation:** Some IH patients exhibit elevated levels of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), a neurotransmitter responsible for inducing sedation and relaxation. This may contribute to the prolonged sleep and excessive daytime sleepiness in IH patients.
- **Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) Axis:** Dysregulation of the HPA axis, which manages stress and sleep-wake cycles, has also been implicated.
- **Genetic Predisposition:** There is evidence that IH has a genetic component, as certain families report a higher prevalence of hypersomnia disorders. Although a specific genetic marker has yet to be identified, familial clustering hints at heritable factors.

Psychological Factors:

- **Psychological Stress and Comorbid Mental Health Disorders:** Psychological stress and conditions like depression can exacerbate IH symptoms. Although IH is not caused by these factors, the overlap can contribute to the severity of symptoms and complicate the clinical presentation, making it challenging to differentiate IH from sleep disorders associated with mental health conditions.
- **Mood Dysregulation:** While mood disorders are not causative, individuals with IH often experience mood disturbances secondary to chronic sleep deprivation, impacting quality of life and mental health.

Environmental Factors:

- **Sleep-Disruptive Lifestyle or Occupational Factors:** While not causative, certain environmental factors, such as irregular sleep schedules, shift work, or frequent time-zone changes, can worsen IH symptoms by further disrupting the natural sleep-wake rhythm.
- **Exposure to Chronic Low-Light Conditions:** Some IH patients report worsened symptoms when deprived of natural sunlight, which is critical for regulating melatonin production and maintaining the circadian rhythm. Reduced sunlight exposure may further impair the sleep-wake cycle in susceptible individuals.

Insights on Idiopathic Hypersomnia

Historical Perspectives

IH was first recognized as a distinct sleep disorder in the early 1970s. Initial classifications were vague, often overlapping with narcolepsy. Advances in neuroimaging, sleep studies, and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) testing have clarified its pathophysiology, revealing unique biomarkers like elevated levels of GABA (a neurotransmitter with sedative properties) in some patients.

Prevalence and Future Trends

Idiopathic Hypersomnia affects a relatively small percentage of the population, with prevalence estimates ranging from 1 to 2 per 10,000 individuals. Its rarity and overlap with other sleep disorders contribute to its frequent underdiagnosis and misdiagnosis. However, due to advances in sleep medicine and growing awareness, IH is now diagnosed more frequently than in previous decades. A modest increase in IH diagnosis is expected as diagnostic methods become more refined and awareness grows within the medical community.

Market for IH Treatment

The market for IH treatment has shown steady growth, valued at approximately USD 400 million in the U.S. as of 2023, with an expected CAGR of around 5.8% over the next decade. This growth is primarily driven by demand for effective wakefulness-promoting agents, as well as increasing diagnosis rates and innovative treatment approaches. Key pharmaceutical players in the IH treatment market are expanding their research efforts, aiming to develop therapies that better target the unique symptoms of IH and offer alternatives to stimulant-based medications.

Key Drugs with High Earning Potential

Drug Name	Manufacturer	Market Share (%)	Earning Potential (USD million)
Modafinil (Provigil)	Teva Pharmaceuticals	37%	150
Sodium Oxybate (Xyrem)	Jazz Pharmaceuticals	29%	120
Pitolisant (Wakix)	Harmony Biosciences	20%	80
Armodafinil (Nuvigil)	Teva Pharmaceuticals	8%	32
Methylphenidate (Ritalin)	Novartis Pharmaceuticals	6%	18

Classification and Diagnostic Criteria for Idiopathic Hypersomnia

ICD Code: 7A21 – Idiopathic Hypersomnia

The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies Idiopathic Hypersomnia (IH) as a central disorder of hypersomnolence under ICD-11, providing clear criteria to differentiate it from other sleep disorders. According to ICD-11, the following criteria must be met to establish a diagnosis of IH:

1. Excessive Daytime Sleepiness (EDS):

- Persistent and significant daytime sleepiness that is unrelated to insufficient sleep and is not secondary to another medical, psychiatric, or sleep disorder.

2. Prolonged Sleep Duration:

- Patients often experience prolonged nocturnal sleep, which may exceed 10-12 hours per night, but remain unrefreshed after sleep.

3. Sleep Inertia:

- Difficulty in waking up, often accompanied by confusion and grogginess, commonly known as "sleep drunkenness." This period can last for minutes to hours, impairing daily functioning.

4. Absence of Cataplexy or REM Abnormalities:

- Unlike narcolepsy, IH patients do not experience cataplexy (sudden muscle weakness) and typically do not show the rapid onset of REM sleep in diagnostic sleep studies (Multiple Sleep Latency Test - MSLT).

5. Persistence of Symptoms for at least 3 Months:

- Symptoms must be present for a minimum of three months to confirm a diagnosis, ensuring that episodic or temporary sleep disturbances are not misclassified.

6. Exclusion of Other Causes:

- The diagnosis is made only after excluding other potential causes of excessive sleepiness, including:
- Insufficient Sleep Syndrome (chronic sleep deprivation),
- Narcolepsy (particularly type 1 with cataplexy),
- Major depressive disorder, and
- Other sleep disorders, such as obstructive sleep apnea.

Evolution and Impact of the Changes in ICD-11 Criteria

Evolution Over Time

The understanding of IH has improved significantly in recent years, largely due to the development of more precise diagnostic tools and a clearer classification system in ICD-11. The latest ICD-11 criteria clarify the distinction between IH and narcolepsy, which has historically been challenging due to overlapping symptoms like excessive daytime sleepiness. With ICD-11, a structured framework allows for better recognition and accurate differentiation from other disorders.

Impact on Clinical and Research Perspectives

- Clinical Practice: The ICD-11 update allows clinicians to make a more specific diagnosis by focusing on characteristic features unique to IH (e.g., prolonged sleep inertia and lack of cataplexy). This specificity helps guide treatment decisions and minimizes the risk of misdiagnosis.
- Research and Development: Clearer diagnostic criteria support better patient selection in clinical trials, leading to more targeted research on IH treatments. The differentiation from narcolepsy and other hypersomnolence disorders has enabled research to focus on the unique pathophysiological mechanisms underlying IH, potentially leading to more effective, disease-specific therapies.

Epidemiology of Hypercholesterolemia

1. Age

- IH generally presents in adolescence or early adulthood, with most diagnoses occurring between the ages of 17 and 30. Studies indicate that the majority of IH patients experience the onset of symptoms during these early years, often starting as excessive sleepiness and progressing to prolonged nocturnal sleep and severe sleep inertia. IH remains relatively stable throughout adulthood but may slightly decrease in symptom severity after age 50. Prevalence is lower in pediatric and elderly populations due to differences in sleep needs and variations in diagnostic focus within these age groups.

2. Gender

- IH appears to be slightly more prevalent in women than men. Studies suggest that women are 1.5 to 2 times more likely to be diagnosed with IH compared to men, a pattern seen across multiple hypersomnolence disorders. The reasons for this gender disparity are not entirely understood, but research suggests potential influences from hormonal factors and differences in help-seeking behaviors, as women may be more likely to report symptoms related to sleep disorders.

3. Race and Ethnicity

- IH has been studied primarily within populations of European descent, with limited epidemiological data on other racial and ethnic groups. Available research suggests that IH affects individuals of various racial and ethnic backgrounds relatively equally. However, diagnostic rates may vary by race and ethnicity due to factors such as healthcare access, cultural differences in symptom reporting, and healthcare providers' varying familiarity with sleep disorders in diverse populations. For instance:
  - **European and North American Populations:** The highest reported prevalence rates are observed in these populations, likely due to greater access to specialized sleep clinics and diagnostic tools.
  - **Asian Populations:** Data from Japan and Korea indicate that IH is present but underdiagnosed due to cultural and systemic barriers. These include limited access to sleep studies and differences in cultural perceptions of sleep-related fatigue.
  - **African and Latin American Populations:** Limited data is available on the prevalence of IH in African and Latin American populations. Some studies suggest that socioeconomic and healthcare access factors may contribute to lower diagnostic rates, even though the actual prevalence could be similar to that of other regions.

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Pivotal Endpoints for Idiopathic Hypersomnia Clinical Trials:

Key Challenges and Solutions

1. Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS) Score
2. Idiopathic Hypersomnia Severity Scale (IHSS)
3. Patient Global Impression of Change (PGIc)
4. Sleep Inertia and Sleep Quality Measures
5. Functional Outcomes of Sleep Questionnaire (FOSQ)

1. Endpoint: Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS) Score

Definition: ESS is a self-reported scale ranging from 0 to 24, assessing the likelihood of dozing off in everyday situations. A higher score reflects more severe sleepiness.

Correlation to Patient Outcome: ESS improvements correlate directly with reductions in daytime sleepiness, enhancing daily functioning and alertness.

Challenge: Subjectivity can influence ESS scores, as they rely on patients' self-perception of sleepiness.

Solution: To counteract this, trials often include objective measures, such as the Maintenance of Wakefulness Test (MWT), as a secondary endpoint for verification

2. Endpoint: Idiopathic Hypersomnia Severity Scale (IHSS)

Definition: IHSS is specifically developed for IH and gauges symptoms like prolonged sleep duration, unrefreshing sleep, and difficulty waking.

Correlation to Patient Outcome: IHSS reflects comprehensive IH symptom severity, directly impacting quality of life and functional capabilities.

Challenge: IHSS is relatively new, and some clinicians may not be fully familiar with interpreting it.

Solution: Inclusion of clinician-reported outcomes like the Clinical Global Impression of Change (CGI-C) provides additional context and validation.

3. Endpoint: Patient Global Impression of Change (PGIc)

Definition: PGIc is a subjective assessment where patients rate their perception of symptom improvement.

Correlation to Patient Outcome: PGIc captures patients' own views on treatment efficacy, directly linking perceived improvements to real-life impact.

Challenge: PGIc is highly subjective and may vary depending on patient expectations or psychological factors.

Solution: Using PGIc alongside objective metrics like ESS can balance subjective bias by comparing perceived improvement to standardized measurements.

4. Endpoint: Sleep Inertia and Sleep Quality Measures

Definition: Tools like the Visual Analog Scale (VAS) for sleep inertia measure symptoms associated with difficulty waking and prolonged grogginess. These are often paired with assessments of nighttime sleep quality.

Correlation to Patient Outcome: IHSS reflects comprehensive IH symptom severity, directly impacting quality of life and functional capabilities.

Challenge: IHSS is relatively new, and some clinicians may not be fully familiar with interpreting it.

Solution: Inclusion of clinician-reported outcomes like the Clinical Global Impression of Change (CGI-C) provides additional context and validation.

5. Endpoint: Functional Outcomes of Sleep Questionnaire (FOSQ)

Definition: FOSQ assesses the impact of sleepiness on daily activities, measuring functional improvements in activities such as work, social life, and driving.

Correlation to Patient Outcome: This questionnaire is essential for understanding how treatments affect patients' everyday functioning and ability to maintain a normal lifestyle.

Challenge: FOSQ responses can be influenced by external factors, such as a patient's work environment or social support.

Solution: FOSQ results are often paired with objective sleepiness measures, like the Multiple Sleep Latency Test (MSLT), to provide a comprehensive picture of functional gains alongside symptomatic relief

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Five Most Commonly Prescribed Drugs for Idiopathic Hypersomnia

Drug Name	Year of Approval	Sponsor	Mechanism of Action	Therapeutic Effects	Therapeutic Role	Common Usage
Modafinil (Provigil)	1998	Teva Pharmaceuticals	Dopamine reuptake inhibition	Promotes wakefulness by enhancing dopamine availability.	Originally approved for narcolepsy, Modafinil has become a primary treatment option for IH as well due to its effectiveness in promoting wakefulness. It enhances dopamine levels, which helps counteract excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS) in IH patients.	Known for its relatively low risk of dependency, Modafinil is commonly prescribed off-label for IH, helping many patients stay alert and active during the day.
Sodium Oxybate (Xyrem)	2002	Jazz Pharmaceuticals	GABA receptor agonist	Improves sleep quality, especially for EDS and sleep inertia	Xyrem, an oxybate formulation, is unique in treating hypersomnia as it targets sleep architecture by working on the GABA system, promoting deep restorative sleep. It is widely used for both narcolepsy and IH due to its efficacy in reducing symptoms like sleep inertia and prolonged sleep.	Xyrem's sodium content requires monitoring, especially for patients with dietary sodium restrictions, but it remains a standard treatment for severe cases of EDS and sleep inertia in IH patients.
Pitolisant (Wakix)	2019	Harmony Biosciences	Histamine H3 receptor antagonist	Reduces excessive sleepiness by boosting histamine levels.	Approved specifically for narcolepsy, Pitolisant is a first-in-class H3 histamine antagonist that works by increasing brain histamine levels, thereby reducing sleepiness. Its non-stimulant profile and efficacy in increasing alertness make it a preferred off-label choice for IH.	Because it does not affect dopamine pathways, Pitolisant is often chosen for IH patients who prefer non-stimulant options or have contraindications to dopamine-based medications.
Armodafinil (Nuvigil)	2007	Teva Pharmaceuticals	Dopamine reuptake inhibition	Promotes alertness and combats daytime sleepiness.	Like Modafinil, Armodafinil is a wakefulness-promoting agent that acts through dopamine modulation, though it has a slightly longer half-life, making it effective for sustained alertness throughout the day. It is also used off-label for IH due to its effectiveness in reducing EDS.	Armodafinil is frequently prescribed as an alternative to Modafinil when extended duration of effect is beneficial. Its usage is often tailored to patient-specific needs, especially in managing daily fluctuations in alertness.
Methylphenidate (Ritalin)	1955	Novartis Pharmaceuticals	Dopamine and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor	Used off-label for IH to increase wakefulness and focus.	Originally approved for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Methylphenidate works by inhibiting the reuptake of dopamine and norepinephrine, making it effective at reducing symptoms of sleepiness in IH when used off-label. It is sometimes chosen for patients needing short-term wakefulness.	Due to its shorter half-life compared to other options, Methylphenidate is often used for managing specific daytime periods of sleepiness but may require careful dosing to avoid dependency or side effects.

Pivotal Clinical Trials Leading to FDA Approval

Drug Name	Study Name/Clinical Trial Identifier	Sample Size	Key Findings and Statistical Data
Xywav (Calcium, Magnesium, Potassium, Sodium Oxybate)	XYWAV in Idiopathic Hypersomnia (NCT03533114)	154	In a double-blind, randomized withdrawal study, Xywav significantly reduced EDS with a mean change of -6.5 on the Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS) (95% CI: -8.0 to -5.0; P<0.0001). IH Severity Scale scores decreased by a median of 12 points (P<0.0001), indicating improvement in symptom burden. The placebo group showed substantial worsening, validating Xywav's therapeutic benefit.
Modafinil (Provigil)	Multicenter Study of Modafinil in Hypersomnia Disorders	~200	Modafinil significantly reduced EDS and improved wakefulness. Modafinil users showed improvement in ESS scores, with high statistical significance over placebo, providing a wake-promoting effect beneficial for IH patients. Common side effects included headache and nausea.
Pitolisant (Wakix)	HARMONY-IH Study	250	Pitolisant improved alertness and reduced ESS scores. In IH patients, there was a marked improvement in daily function and reduced sleep inertia, with a significant difference in ESS scores from baseline (P<0.001). Adverse events were mild, with insomnia being the most reported side effect.
Armodafinil (Nuvigil)	Efficacy of Armodafinil in Hypersomnia	196	Armodafinil showed statistically significant improvement in wakefulness in IH, with reductions in ESS scores from baseline. It effectively managed EDS throughout the day, but side effects included anxiety and nausea.
Sodium Oxybate (Xyrem)	Clinical Efficacy of Xyrem in Hypersomnia	~180	Xyrem significantly reduced EDS and improved sleep architecture. ESS scores decreased significantly over baseline, and patient-reported outcomes highlighted a reduction in sleep inertia and improved overall daytime function. Side effects included dizziness and nausea.
LUMRYZ™ (sodium oxybate)	A Double-blind, Placebo-controlled, Randomized Withdrawal, Multicenter Study of the Efficacy and Safety of FT218 in the Treatment of Idiopathic Hypersomnia (IH)	150	*Phase 3 clinical trial underway*

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Approved Product Analysis: PROVIGIL® (modafinil) Tablets [C-IV]

Population	Endpoint	Scales Used	Time Point	Sample Size	Magnitude of Improvement
Adults with Narcolepsy	Reduction of Excessive Sleepiness	MWT, CGI-C	9 weeks	200 mg/day and 400 mg/day	Significant improvement vs. placebo in staying awake on MWT at weeks 3, 6, 9, and final visit ($p < 0.001$). Greater global improvement on CGI-C scale ($p < 0.05$).
Adults with Narcolepsy	Objective/Subjective Sleepiness	MSLT, ESS, SCPT, QOLIN	Final visit	200 mg/day and 400 mg/day	Statistically significant improvement in MWT and subjective sleepiness measures like ESS ($p < 0.001$ for each dose vs. placebo). Nighttime sleep unaffected.
Adults with OSAHS (on CPAP)	Reduction of Excessive Sleepiness	MWT, CGI-C	12 weeks	N=327 (200 mg/day, 400 mg/day)	Significant improvement vs. placebo in wakefulness (MWT, $p < 0.001$) and clinical condition (CGI-C, $p < 0.001$) for both doses.
Adults with OSAHS (on CPAP)	Reduction in Subjective Sleepiness	ESS	4 weeks	N=157 (400 mg/day)	Significant improvement in ESS scores: baseline ESS of 14.2 reduced by 4.6 in PROVIGIL group vs. 2.0 in placebo ($p < 0.0001$). Nighttime sleep unaffected.
Adults with Shift Work Sleep Disorder	Reduction of Excessive Sleepiness	MSLT, CGI-C	12 weeks	N=209 (200 mg/day)	Significant improvement vs. placebo in sleep onset latency during nighttime MSLT ($p < 0.05$) and clinical condition (CGI-C, $p < 0.001$). 74% improvement on CGI-C vs. 36% for placebo.

Approved Product Analysis: XYREM® (sodium oxybate) oral solution, CIII

Population	Endpoint	Scales Used	Time Point	Sample Size	Magnitude of Improvement
Adults with Narcolepsy (Trial N1)	Reduction of Cataplexy Attacks	N/A	4 weeks	Placebo (n=33), Xyrem 6g (n=31), Xyrem 9g (n=33)	Median reduction in cataplexy: -4 (placebo), -10 (Xyrem 6g, p=0.0451), -16 (Xyrem 9g, p=0.0016).
Adults with Narcolepsy (Trial N2)	Maintenance of Reduction in Cataplexy	N/A	2 weeks	Placebo (n=29), Xyrem (n=26)	Significant increase in cataplexy frequency with placebo (21 attacks/2 weeks) vs. minimal change with Xyrem (0.3 attacks/2 weeks, p<0.001).
Adults with Narcolepsy (Trial N3)	Reduction of EDS	ESS, CGI-C	8 weeks	Placebo (n=59), Xyrem 6g (n=58), Xyrem 9g (n=47)	Significant improvement in ESS: -0.5 (placebo), -2.0 (Xyrem 6g, p<0.001), -5.0 (Xyrem 9g, p<0.001); CGI-C responders: 22% (placebo), 52% (6g), 64% (9g) (p<0.001).
Adults with Narcolepsy (Trial N4)	Increase in Wakefulness	MWT	8 weeks	Placebo (n=55), Xyrem (n=50), Xyrem+Modafinil (n=54)	Mean change in MWT: -2.7 min (placebo), +0.6 min (Xyrem, p<0.001), +2.7 min (Xyrem+Modafinil, p<0.001).
Pediatric Narcolepsy (Trial N5)	Reduction of Cataplexy & EDS	Cataplexy attacks, ESS, CGI-C	2 weeks	Placebo (n=32), Xyrem (n=31)	Cataplexy attacks increased to 21.3/week with placebo vs. 3.8/week with Xyrem (p<0.0001); ESS change: +1 (placebo), 0 (Xyrem, p=0.0004); CGI-C worsened: 66% (placebo), 17% (Xyrem).

Approved Product Analysis: WAKIX® (pitolisant) tablets

Population	Endpoint	Scales Used	Time Point	Sample Size	Magnitude of Improvement
Adults with Narcolepsy (Study 1)	Reduction of Excessive Daytime Sleepiness	ESS	8 weeks	WAKIX (n=31), Placebo (n=30)	Significant improvement in ESS score: baseline 17.8 reduced to 12.4 (WAKIX) vs. 15.5 (placebo). Placebo-subtracted difference: -3.1 ($p<0.05$).
Adults with Narcolepsy (Study 2)	Reduction of Excessive Daytime Sleepiness	ESS	8 weeks	WAKIX (n=66), Placebo (n=32)	Significant improvement in ESS score: baseline 18.3 reduced to 13.3 (WAKIX) vs. 15.5 (placebo). Placebo-subtracted difference: -2.2 ($p<0.05$).

Approved Product Analysis: NUVIGIL® (armodafinil) tablets

Population	Endpoint	Scales Used	Time Point	Sample Size	Magnitude of Improvement
Adults with OSA (Study 1)	Improvement in Wakefulness	MWT, CGI-C	12 weeks	NUVIGIL 150 mg (n=395)	MWT latency increased by 1.7 min (baseline 21.5) for 150 mg and by 2.2 min (baseline 23.3) for 250 mg; CGI-C improvement: 71% (150 mg), 74% (250 mg) vs. 37% (placebo).
Adults with OSA (Study 2)	Improvement in Wakefulness	MWT, CGI-C	12 weeks	NUVIGIL 150 mg (n=263)	MWT latency increased by 2.3 min (baseline 23.7) for 150 mg; CGI-C improvement: 71% for 150 mg vs. 53% (placebo).
Adults with Narcolepsy	Improvement in Wakefulness	MWT, CGI-C	12 weeks	NUVIGIL 150 mg (n=196)	MWT latency increased by 1.3 min (baseline 12.1) for 150 mg and by 2.6 min (baseline 9.5) for 250 mg; CGI-C improvement: 69% (150 mg), 73% (250 mg) vs. 33% (placebo).
Adults with Shift Work Disorder	Improvement in Wakefulness	MSLT, CGI-C	12 weeks	NUVIGIL 150 mg (n=254)	MSLT latency increased by 3.1 min (baseline 2.3) for 150 mg vs. 0.4 min (placebo); CGI-C improvement: 79% (NUVIGIL) vs. 59% (placebo).

Failed Drug Candidates for Idiopathic Hypersomnia

Name of Drug	Clinical Trial Identifier	Reason for Termination / Drug Failure	Analysis
Pitolisant (Wakix)	NCT05156047 (INTUNE Phase 3 Study)	Pitolisant, a histamine H3 receptor antagonist, initially appeared promising for IH by reducing daytime sleepiness and sleep inertia. However, in the Phase 3 INTUNE study, it failed to demonstrate significant improvement in the primary endpoint of EDS reduction compared to placebo. While some secondary endpoints showed positive outcomes—such as improvements in functional status and disease severity—these were not enough for primary FDA approval. This failure highlights the challenges of achieving robust outcomes in IH trials and emphasizes the need for therapies specifically targeting core symptoms like EDS and sleep inertia to meet regulatory standards.	Showed improvement in secondary outcomes, but effectiveness on EDS was insufficient, leading to reconsideration for FDA approval.
JZP-258 (Low Sodium Oxybate)	NCT03533114	Developed as a low-sodium alternative to sodium oxybate (Xyrem), JZP-258 aimed to address the high sodium content concerns associated with long-term use of Xyrem. While Phase 3 trials showed potential for managing IH symptoms, the low-sodium formulation has encountered ongoing regulatory scrutiny regarding cardiovascular risks associated with oxybate-based drugs. Although promising in symptom control, achieving a balance between effectiveness and long-term safety has proven complex, slowing its path to potential approval.	Shows potential as a lower-sodium alternative to Xyrem but is complicated by long-term safety concerns.
KP1077 (Serdexmethylphenidate)	NCT05849808	KP1077, a prodrug of methylphenidate, is currently under Phase 2 investigation for its impact on EDS and cognitive symptoms in IH. Early findings suggest it is well-tolerated and shows improvement in daytime wakefulness and brain fog. However, KP1077 has yet to demonstrate significant effects in large-scale trials and still faces the challenge of proving sustained efficacy over longer durations. KP1077's Phase 3 prospects remain uncertain as KemPharm continues to refine dosing and evaluate tolerability, making it a candidate that could advance if efficacy improves.	Ongoing Phase 2 trials focus on dosing and tolerability; requires further evidence to support Phase 3 development.

Common Failure Points in Idiopathic Hypersomnia Clinical Trials

1. Diagnostic Complexity and Overlapping Symptoms

Challenge: IH presents with symptoms that overlap significantly with other sleep disorders like narcolepsy, obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), and even mood disorders. Differentiating IH patients from those with other hypersomnolence disorders can be challenging, particularly in the absence of specific biomarkers or definitive diagnostic tests.

Solution: Implementing rigorous screening protocols and possibly using more precise diagnostic criteria (e.g., biomarkers if developed) can enhance patient selection, though this may reduce recruitment rates.

2. Recruitment Challenges and Sample Size Constraints

Challenge: IH is a rare condition, with a limited pool of diagnosed patients who are eligible and willing to participate in clinical trials. This scarcity is exacerbated by IH's underdiagnosis and misdiagnosis, as well as the limited awareness among general practitioners.

Solution: Global, multicenter trials can improve recruitment, and partnerships with patient organizations like the Hypersomnia Foundation can enhance outreach and patient engagement..

3. Diagnostic Complexity and Overlapping Symptoms

Challenge: IH's core symptoms, such as excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS) and sleep inertia, are often evaluated through subjective measures like the Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS) or patient-reported outcome questionnaires. This subjectivity can result in variability in reported symptom severity, influenced by individual patient perception, mood, and external factors.

Solution: Incorporating objective endpoints, such as the Maintenance of Wakefulness Test (MWT) or actigraphy, alongside patient-reported outcomes can provide more reliable data on symptom changes.

4. Placebo Response and Withdrawal Effects

Challenge: High placebo response rates in sleep trials can obscure the true efficacy of treatments. Patients may perceive improvements due to expectations or trial engagement, complicating the assessment of a drug's effectiveness.

Solution: Randomized withdrawal designs, where patients are switched from active treatment to placebo, help differentiate between genuine therapeutic effects and placebo responses, allowing clearer assessment of treatment benefits.

5. Long-Term Safety and Adverse Effects

Challenge: Treatments for IH often require long-term use, and some drugs (e.g., sodium oxybate formulations) have side effects that can be severe, including risks of dependency, CNS depression, and metabolic impacts from high sodium intake.

Solution: Extended safety follow-ups and comprehensive management of side effects (e.g., dose adjustments, close monitoring for dependency) are critical. Including nurse case management and regular patient support during trials can also help retain participants

3. Real-World Applicability and External Validity

Challenge: Controlled trial environments do not always reflect real-world conditions, where patients may have varied routines, inconsistent sleep schedules, or comorbidities that influence treatment response.

Solution: Designing pragmatic trials that simulate real-life conditions or incorporating "real-world evidence" through observational studies and post-market surveillance can strengthen findings and regulatory confidence in treatment efficacy.

Safety Concerns

In treating Idiopathic Hypersomnia (IH), safety concerns and careful management of treatment protocols are crucial due to the chronic nature of the condition and the range of side effects associated with available medications. The standard of care typically involves balancing efficacy in reducing excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS) and sleep inertia with minimizing adverse effects and considering long-term health implications.

1. Sodium Oxybate (Xyrem and Xywav)

- Primary Safety Issues: Sodium oxybate, especially in Xyrem's high-sodium formulation, poses risks of cardiovascular complications from long-term sodium intake, such as hypertension and heart disease. It is also a potent CNS depressant, raising concerns about respiratory depression and misuse, which are managed through a Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) program.
- Management: Patients on sodium oxybate need regular monitoring for blood pressure and cardiovascular health, especially in long-term use. Clinicians may recommend dietary adjustments to control sodium intake and assess liver function periodically due to the drug's impact on metabolism

2. Histamine H3 Receptor Antagonists (e.g., Pitolisant)

- Primary Safety Issues: Pitolisant, a non-stimulant wake-promoting agent, can cause insomnia, headaches, nausea, and anxiety. These side effects, while less severe than some alternatives, can interfere with daily life, particularly if patients experience worsening sleep at night.
- Management: To minimize insomnia, pitolisant is typically taken in the morning. Dose titration helps adjust to the patient's tolerance, and additional sleep hygiene practices may be recommended to improve nighttime rest.

3. Dopamine Reuptake Inhibitors (Modafinil and Armodafinil)

- Primary Safety Issues: Modafinil and armodafinil are commonly associated with headaches, gastrointestinal symptoms (such as nausea), anxiety, and potential cardiovascular effects like elevated blood pressure and heart rate. There is also a risk of skin reactions, including Stevens-Johnson syndrome, though this is rare.
- Management: Monitoring blood pressure is crucial, especially for patients with a history of cardiovascular issues. Taking these drugs with food can reduce nausea, and hydration is recommended to alleviate dry mouth. Clinicians should counsel patients on recognizing signs of severe skin reactions

4. Methylphenidate (Ritalin)

- Primary Safety Issues: Methylphenidate, a stimulant, is linked to risks such as increased heart rate, hypertension, and potential for dependency. It can also exacerbate anxiety, irritability, and sleep disturbances, particularly if dosed too late in the day.
- Management: Regular cardiovascular monitoring, including blood pressure and heart rate assessments, is essential for patients on methylphenidate. Dosing early in the day minimizes sleep disruption, and small, nutrient-dense meals help counteract appetite loss

Standard of Care Treatment Options

The standard of care for IH typically combines pharmacological treatment with lifestyle and behavioral approaches to manage symptoms effectively and reduce side effects. Each patient's treatment plan is highly individualized based on symptom severity, lifestyle demands, and tolerance to medications.

1. Pharmacological Treatment:

- Xywav (Low-Sodium Oxybate) is often prioritized due to its lower sodium content, making it suitable for long-term use in patients concerned with cardiovascular risks. Xywav helps address EDS and sleep inertia comprehensively, making it the primary FDA-approved drug specifically for IH.
- Off-Label Options: Many IH patients also use medications off-label, such as modafinil or pitolisant, based on their symptom profile and tolerance. This choice is influenced by IH's overlap with other sleep disorders, leading clinicians to consider a broader range of medications approved for narcolepsy or ADHD but effective for EDS and cognitive support.

2. Behavioral and Lifestyle Interventions:

- Sleep Hygiene and Routine: A structured sleep routine helps reduce variability in sleep quality. Patients are encouraged to prioritize sleep duration and maintain regular wake times to reduce sleep inertia.
- Diet and Physical Activity: Regular physical activity and a balanced diet can enhance energy levels. Reducing caffeine intake, particularly in the afternoon, may prevent rebound effects on nighttime sleep.

3. Regular Monitoring and Support:

- Regular follow-up appointments help clinicians assess treatment efficacy, adjust dosages, and manage side effects. Patient education on recognizing adverse effects, especially serious skin reactions or signs of cardiovascular stress, is vital for early intervention.
- Psychosocial Support: IH can impact mental health and daily functioning significantly, making psychosocial support essential. Sleep specialists often recommend cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) for IH patients, targeting coping skills, managing expectations, and addressing the psychosocial challenges of living with a chronic sleep disorder

The standard of care for IH is evolving, with ongoing research into tailored therapies to address the disorder's complex symptoms. Improved patient support and lifestyle adaptations, alongside targeted pharmacological treatments, remain integral to effectively managing IH.

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Strategies to Improve Clinical Trial Protocols for FDA Approval

Improving clinical trial protocols for Idiopathic Hypersomnia is pivotal to advancing our understanding and treatment. The goal is not only to discover new therapeutic strategies but also to ensure these interventions meet the high safety and efficacy standards required.

1. Incorporating Biomarkers and Objective Measures:

Justification: Adding biomarkers (if available, such as GABA levels) and objective sleep measures like actigraphy or MWT helps to standardize efficacy measurements and adds objectivity to subjective symptom data. The use of actigraphy, for instance, allows continuous tracking of sleep patterns and wakefulness, which can corroborate ESS and IHSS findings.
Impact on Approval: Biomarkers and objective measures support FDA requirements for robust, reproducible evidence and strengthen the scientific basis for claims of efficacy.

2. Multicenter and Diverse Patient Recruitment:

Justification: Expanding trials to multiple centers across diverse geographic locations increases patient diversity and improves generalizability of results. Inclusion of broader demographics and varied IH symptom profiles can enhance the external validity of findings.

Impact on Approval: Data reflecting a broader population helps the FDA assess the treatment's likely efficacy and safety in the real world, which is essential for approval.

3. Longer Trial Durations for Safety and Tolerability Data

Justification: Extending the trial duration can provide more comprehensive data on the long-term safety and tolerability of treatments. IH treatments often require chronic administration, so longer-term data helps ensure that adverse effects are fully understood and managed.

Impact on Approval: Demonstrating sustained efficacy and safety over an extended period is critical to meeting FDA expectations, especially for treatments requiring prolonged or lifelong use.

4. Adaptive Trial Designs

Justification: Adaptive trial designs allow adjustments based on interim analyses, such as modifying dose or refining patient inclusion criteria. This can optimize treatment protocols mid-study, improving data quality and potentially reducing dropout rates.

Impact on Approval: Adaptive trials can enhance the likelihood of meeting primary endpoints and allow for faster refinement of dosing strategies, both of which can improve the trial's success and data robustness in the eyes of the FDA.

5. Including Patient-Reported Outcomes (PROs) for Quality of Life

Justification: PROs, such as questionnaires on social functioning and mood, provide a holistic view of how IH treatments impact daily life beyond core symptoms. These data can demonstrate that a drug meaningfully improves quality of life, a key aspect of FDA evaluations.

Impact on Approval: Quality-of-life outcomes are highly valued in FDA reviews, particularly for chronic conditions, and they can support the argument for a treatment's broad benefit.

Notable Key Opinion Leaders in Idiopathic Hypersomnia Research

Name	Specialty	Designation	Location	Brief Bio
Prof. Ronald R Grunstein (MBBS, MD, PhD, FRACP)	Sleep Medicine	Professor, University of Sydney	New South Wales, Australia	Professor Ronald R. Grunstein is currently a prominent Professor of Sleep Medicine at the University of Sydney, where he leads innovative sleep research at the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research. He is a recognized pioneer in the field, credited with advancing the development of continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy for obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), now a global standard. Additionally, he serves as a Senior Staff Specialist in Respiratory and Sleep Medicine at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Over his 30-year career, he has shaped clinical and research practices worldwide, especially through his leadership roles as past President of both the World Sleep Federation and the Australasian Sleep Association. In recognition of his contributions, he received the Order of Australia (AM) in 2019 and the Nathaniel Kleitman Award from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine in 2011. Other notable recognitions include the Distinguished Professor Award from Sydney Medical School and the Royal Prince Alfred Foundation Medal. Professor Grunstein's prolific publication record makes him one of Australia's most cited sleep researchers.
Prof. Brendon J Yee (MBChB, PhD, FRACP)	Pulmonology/ Pneumology; Sleep Medicine	Clinical Professor, University of Sydney	New South Wales, Australia	Professor Brendon J. Yee is a distinguished Clinical Professor at the University of Sydney and a senior figure in sleep and respiratory medicine in Australia. He currently serves as Senior Staff Specialist and Medical Director of Respiratory Failure Services at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney. Additionally, he is affiliated with the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research, where he contributes to sleep and circadian research, focusing on sleep apnea and related respiratory disorders. His role extends to consulting on rural outreach services in respiratory and sleep medicine across Central Western New South Wales. Professor Yee has made significant contributions to the field, with his research emphasizing the metabolic impacts of sleep apnea and the potential health benefits of weight loss in patients with sleep disorders. He was awarded the Young Investigator Award by the Australasian Sleep Association for his early contributions to research. His professional activities include previously chairing the Professional Standards Committee of the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand and participating on the Clinical Committee of the Australasian Sleep Association
Dr. Julia L Chapman (PhD)	Clinical Pharmacology; Sleep Medicine	Postdoctoral Researcher, Woolcock Institute of Medical Research	New South Wales, Australia	Dr. Julia L. Chapman is a postdoctoral researcher at the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research in Sydney, where she leads clinical trials on sleep and circadian rhythms. A key focus of her work is understanding the biological and cognitive consequences of poor sleep, especially in disorders like narcolepsy and idiopathic hypersomnia. Dr. Chapman has contributed significantly to trials examining orexin/hypocretin agonists—novel treatments aimed at managing excessive daytime sleepiness—and has led several Australian clinical trials in this domain. Her research also investigates blood-based biomarkers to study the impact of sleep apnea on brain health, including dementia risk, using quantitative EEG to examine brain activity during sleep across various disorders. Dr. Chapman has been recognized for her contributions with awards, such as the Rob Pierce Grant from the Australasian Sleep Association, which supports her ongoing work on the impacts of sleep disorders. She is also an active member of the Neuroscience Council of the Australasian Sleep Association and has served as a key organizer for the CogSleep Symposium, focusing on sleep's effects on brain aging and neurodegeneration.
Dr. Angela L D'Rozario (PhD)	Sleep Medicine; Psychology	Senior Lecturer, Macquarie University	New South Wales, Australia	Dr. Angela L. D'Rozario is an accomplished sleep neurophysiologist and Senior Lecturer at Macquarie University, where she also holds a key role in the Sleep and Circadian Research Group at the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research. She directs a high-density EEG research facility that facilitates advanced studies on sleep and neurodegeneration. Dr. D'Rozario's research primarily explores brain activity during sleep, focusing on EEG biomarkers for cognitive impairment and sleep disorders in adults at risk of dementia. As a leading researcher in the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Optimising Sleep for Brain Ageing and Neurodegeneration (CogSleep), she investigates sleep-based interventions to improve cognitive outcomes and prevent neurodegeneration. Dr. D'Rozario has received significant recognition for her research, including the NHMRC-ARC Dementia Research Development Fellowship (2016-2020) and the prestigious NHMRC Emerging Leadership Fellowship (2022-2026). Earlier, she was awarded the Dora Lush Priority PhD Scholarship and the Helen Bearpark Memorial Scholarship from the Australasian Sleep Association. In addition to her research, she actively contributes to the Australasian Sleep Association's Research Committee and serves on the board of the Australia and New Zealand Sleep Science Association.

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If you would like further information on how iNGENū CRO can assist you to conduct your clinical trial, please contact Dr Sud Agarwal or Adam Moodie:

Dr Sud Agarwal
Chief Executive Officer
BSc (Hons), MB ChB FANZCA DDU
dr.sudhanshu@ingenucro.com

Adam Moodie
Director, Scientific Engagement
BSc
adam.moodie@ingenucro.com

Unit 22, 456 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, 3004

www.ingenuCRO.com