

THIS FRIDAY'S
JACKPOT

\$60
MILLION^{EST.}

41^X
EST.
\$1 MILLION
MAXMILLIONS™

MAX
BUY TICKET

Know the odds
of the game.

bclc

19+

NEWS LOCAL

Methadone-like substitute studied for addiction

By Michael Mui, 24 Hours Vancouver
Thursday, August 11, 2016 5:29:00 PDT PM



A drug dealer prepares cocaine for street sale. Getty Images

Local drug researchers may have figured out a way to use medicine normally taken to treat seizures to wean people off of cocaine and potentially other stimulants.

Dr. Daniel Werb, an adjunct assistant professor in the Division of AIDS at the University of B.C., said on Thursday he examined a number of studies involving the anti-convulsant drug topiramate, and found that in at least one study, people who took topiramate were twice as likely to abstain from doing cocaine.

Topiramate, Werb said, is generally understood to have six effects on the body, but it's unclear which effect is most important for treating seizures.

What researchers do know is that one of the effects increases the amount of GABA inside the body. GABA is an acid which reduces the amount of dopamine released in the brain, and the belief is that this reduction in dopamine caused by topiramate is what's helping drug users abstain from cocaine.

Unlike opioids, where substitutes such as methadone or suboxone have been shown to reduce dependency among users, nothing of the sort currently exists for stimulants like cocaine.

"We don't have currently on the market, or even emerging onto the market, a similarly highly effective pharmacological therapy for stimulants, and that's really concerning because we know there are a number of harms associated with stimulants like cocaine, like crystal methamphetamine."

However, drug users can't just obtain topiramate without a special exemption from their doctors yet. So far, using the drug to treat addiction remains a theory.