Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome

Neuroleptic malignant syndrome is a nervous system disorder most often caused by an adverse reaction to:

- Neuroleptic drugs
- Antipsychotic drugs.

It is a life threatening syndrome.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms include:

- High fever.
- Sweating.
- Unstable blood pressure.
- Stupor.
- Muscular rigidity.
- Problems with the nervous system (*autonomic dysfunction*).

In most cases, the disorder develops within the first 2 weeks of taking the drug. However, the disorder may develop any time these drugs are used. The syndrome can also occur in people taking anti-Parkinsonism drugs known as dopaminergics. With this drug the syndrome occurs if those drugs are discontinued abruptly.

TREATMENT

Intensive care is needed. The drugs that cause the reaction is stopped. The fever is treated aggressively. A muscle relaxant may be prescribed.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

Early treatment improves outcome. In some cases, a low potency neuroleptic can be reintroduced very slowly. This reintroduction happens only when the individual recovers. There is a risk that the syndrome might recur. Another alternative is to substitute another class of drugs for the neuroleptic. Anesthesia may be a risk to individuals who have experienced neuroleptic malignant syndrome.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

The NINDS supports research on neurological disorders such as neuroleptic malignant syndrome. Much of this research focuses on finding ways to prevent and treat the disorder.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

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