Tardive Dyskinesia

Tardive dyskinesia is a neurological syndrome. It is caused by the long-term use of neuroleptic drugs. Those drugs are generally prescribed for psychiatric disorders, as well as for some gastrointestinal and neurological disorders. This syndrome causes repetitive, involuntary, purposeless movements.

SYMPTOMS

Signs of the disorder may include:

- Grimacing.
- Tongue protrusion.
- Lip smacking, puckering and pursing.
- Rapid eye blinking.
- Rapid movements of the arms, legs, and trunk.
- Impaired movements of the fingers. It may appear as though the patient is playing an invisible guitar or piano.

TREATMENT

There is no standard treatment for this syndrome. Treatment is highly individualized. The first step is generally to stop or minimize the use of the neuroleptic drug. But for patients with a severe underlying condition this may not be a feasible option. Replacing the neuroleptic drug with substitute drugs may help some patients. Other drugs may also be helpful. Examples include:

- Benzodiazepines.
- Adrenergic antagonists.
- Dopamine agonists.

Symptoms may last long after the neuroleptic drugs have been stopped. But, with careful management, some symptoms may improve and/or disappear with time.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

The NINDS conducts and supports a broad range of research on movement disorders. These include tardive dyskinesia. The goals of this research are:

- To improve understanding of these disorders.
- To discover ways to treat, prevent, and cure them.

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

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