

Steroid Fails to Prevent Memory Loss After ECT

International Medical News Service

BELLE MEAD, N.J. — Dexamehasone failed to prevent memory loss and confusion in a group of patients receiving electroconvulsive therapy, contrary to an earlier report, and appears to have slowed the recovery from depression in some patients, say Dr. Robert Lynn Horne and his associates at the Carrier Foundation.

Dexamethasone and placebo were compared in a double-blind study of 48 patients assigned to one of four treatment groups: bilateral ECT with dexamethasone, nondominant unilateral ECT with the drug, bilateral ECT with placebo, or unilateral ECT with placebo. Investigators assessed the effects of each treatment mode on preventing the post-ECT amnesic syndrome and on the depression itself.

Contrary to expectations, patients receiving dexamethasone showed greater memory impairment following ECT than did patients receiving placebo; the greater attentional and short-term memory deficits appeared in both the bilateral and unilateral ECT groups.

Recovery from depression was impeded in the dexamethasone group that received bilateral ECT but not in the unilateral group, the investigators say (Biol. Psychiatry 19:13-27, 1984).

Dexamethasone may work on two separate mechanisms, worsening memory impairment due to ECT-induced cerebral hypoxia while counteracting increases in hypothalamic activity.

Dr. Horne's associates in the study were Drs. Helen M. Perrinati, Matthew Menken, A. Arthur Sugarman, Ervin Varga, and George F. Wilson.

Receives Fuller Award



LOS ANGELES — Dr. Luther D. Robinson, associate professor of psychiatry at Howard University College of Medicine, Washington, received the Solomon Carter Fuller Award at the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association.

Dr. Robinson, whose special interest is the mental health of the deaf, established the nation's first mental health program for the deaf at St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, in 1963. The award is given in memory of Dr. Fuller, the first black psychiatrist in the United States.

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