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Sodium Valproate in Sydenham's Chorea

The conventional drug therapy of Sydenham's chorea includes the use of

drugs like phenobarbitone, chlorpromazine, diazepam and haloperidol. Recent reports indicate that sodium valproate is an effective drug in the management of abnormal movements in Sydenham's chorea(1-3). A brief account of the previously reported studies(1-3) along with our own experience of treating five cases of Sydenham's chorea with sodium valproate is presented in the *Table*.

The effectiveness of sodium valproate as an anticonvulsant is well known but its effectiveness in control of abnormal movements in Sydenham's chorea is of recent interest. The review of published reports(1-3) and our own experience of treating five cases of Sydenham's chorea with sodium valproate indicates that it is an effective drug in the control of movement disorders in Sydenham's chorea as well.

The precise mechanism by which sodium valproate controls involuntary movements is not known. However, sodium valproate is known to raise the level of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), particularly in the striatum and substantia nigra(4). This increase may exert its effect through modification of the GABAergic synaptic transmission and hence control the abnormal movements. This effect on the basal ganglia may be totally different from the

TABLE—Summary of Earlier Reports and Our Experience

Author	No. of cases	Age range (years)	Duration of involuntary movements before valproate therapy	Dose of valproate	Response (in days)	Relapse (cases)
McLachlan(1)	1	19	8 weeks	250 mg BID	2	Nil
Dhanraj <i>et al.</i> (2)	5	11-18	5 days-130 weeks	15-20 mg/kg/day	5-10	Nil
Daoud <i>et al.</i> (3)	15	5-13	1-104 weeks	15-20 mg/kg/day	4-8	2
Present series	5	9-12	1-3 weeks	20 mg/kg/day	7-10	Nil

anticonvulsant effect of sodium valproate(3).

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