Chloral Hydrate Encyclopedia Article

Chloral Hydrate

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Chloral Hydrate

Chloral hydrate is one of the oldest sedative agents still in use. It was made by the German chemist Liebig in 1832 and introduced into general use in 1869 as a substitute for LAUDANUM, an alcoholic solution of OPIUM. Chloral hydrate differs from the BARBITURATES in that it is a simple molecule composed of two carbon atoms, three hydrogen atoms, two oxygen atoms, and three chloride atoms. It is the famous (or infamous) substance added to alcohol to make a *Mickey Finn*, a drink known to cause those who drink it to become unconscious. Because it shares many effects of other central nervous system depressants, it can be used to treat the alcohol withdrawal syndrome. Chloral hydrate was a popular sedative for elderly patients because its effects occur quickly, last only a short time, and leave no nagging hangover effect. However, it is inconvenient to use (up to 2 grams must be taken by mouth) and, after the introduction of the BENZODIAZEPINES, its use has decreased.

Bibliography

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