Meprobamate Encyclopedia Article

Meprobamate

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Meprobamate

This is a SEDATIVE-HYPNOTIC drug that is now typically used to treat muscle spasms. Meprobamate is prescribed and sold as Deprol, Equagesic, Equanil, Meprospan, and Miltown. Because of its abuse potential, it is included in Schedule IV of the CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ACT. It was first introduced into clinical medicine in 1955 for the treatment of ANXIETY. At the time it was thought to have specific antianxiety effects and to be quite different from other sedative-hypnotics. Also introduced at about the same time were chlorpromazine (Thorazine), which had remarkable ANTIPSYCHOTIC effects, and reserpine, which had tranquilizing as well as blood pressure-lowering effects. These three agents were considered the harbingers of the new era of PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY and helped popularize the new term *tranquilizer*.

Within a year or two after its introduction, meprobamate had become one of the most widely prescribed drugs in the United States. It was not long however, before its distinction from other sedative-hypnotic agents was reassessed, and within a decade it was recognized that meprobamate shared many of the properties of other central nervous system depressants, such as the BARBITURATES. By the early 1960s, its use for the treatment of anxiety was eclipsed by the BENZODIAZEPINES. Although it is prescribed as a muscle relaxant, the only use currently approved in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration is as a sedative-hypnotic.

Figure 1 *Meprobamate*

Meprobamate has a number of side effects, including tremors, nausea, depression, and various allergic reactions. Continued use of high doses can result in TOLERANCE AND PHYSICAL DEPENDENCE. Convulsions and other signs of withdrawal are reported upon termination of high-dose treatment or inappropriate use.

Bibliography

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