Indicated for acute mania, manic states

Lentolith (lithium carbonate) available from Intal Ethicals, is indicated for acute mania and manic states involving mild levels of hyperacidity and excitation. It may also be used effectively in certain patients with depression, but the chances of success cannot be predicted.

Contra-indications include impaired renal function cardiac disease, patients with evidence of brain damage and those on a salt-free diet, because when sodium intake is lowered lithium excretion is slower and severe intoxication may ensue.

The specific biochemical mechanism of lithium action is unknown. Lithium alters sodium transport in nerve and muscle cells and effects a shift towards intraneuronal metabolism of catecholamines.

Side-effects include fine hand tremor, slurred speech polyuria, and mild thirst during initial therapy for the acute manic phase which may persist throughout therapy.

Patients on therapeutic doses of lithium may complain of fatigue and muscular weakness. Toxic signs are rarely seen in patients stabilised on maintenance doses.

Diarrhoea, vomiting, drowsiness, muscular weakness and lack of co-ordination may be early signs of lithium intoxication.

Reported toxic reactions include tremor, incontinence epileptiform seizures, cardiac arrhythmia, drying and thinning of hair, dehydration and weight loss. The physician should be alert for possible thyroid involvement. Diuretics should not be used concomitantly with lithium carbonate therapy.

Injectable, highly potent antipsychotic

Modcate injection (fluphenazine decanoate 25mg/ml), an esterified trifluoromethyl phenothiazine from Squibb Laboratories, is a highly potent antipsychotic agent with a markedly extended duration of action. The onset of action generally appears between 24 and 72 hours after injection, and the effects of the drug on psychotic symptoms become significant within 48 to 96 hours. The therapeutic activity then continues for one to four weeks or longer. To date Modcate is the longest acting phenothiazine preparation available.

Fluphenazine decanoate reduces hallucinations, delusions, confusion, withdrawal and to a lesser degree, hostility and agitation. In general the psychotic patient becomes more co-operative, less withdrawn, and more responsive to social situations and more subject to psychotherapy or other nonchemotherapeutic measures.

Modcate is indicated in the management of psychotic disorders including schizophrenia, manic and organic brain syndrome. It is of particular value in the treatment of chronic schizophrenia.

It is useful in the hospital milieu because of its long duration of action in the long-term maintenance therapy of chronically psychotic patients who are amenable to out-patient therapy.

Modcate is contra-indicated in patients with suspected or established subcortical brain damage — with or without hypothalamic damage — since a hyperthermic reaction with temperatures in excess of 40°C may occur in such patients. It should also not be used in patients receiving large doses of hypnotics.

The side-effects most frequently reported with pheothiazine compounds and other antipsychotic agents are pseudoparkinsonism, akathisia, dystonia, dystonias and other extrapyramidal reactions. These are usually reversible. However, a persistent pseudo-parkinsonism syndrome may develop after prolonged administration of phenothiazines.

A reduction in dosage or symptomatic treatment may be necessary to relieve drowsiness, lethargy or depression if they occur.

Further details are available from Squibb Laboratories (Pty) Limited, Electron Avenue, Isando, Transvaal.

Anxiolytic therapy without impairment

The first 1.5 benzodiazepine to be introduced for anxiolytic therapy in South Africa, Urbanol (clobazam), is claimed to reduce anxiety without any apparent impairment of psychomotor performance.

Marketed by Roussel Laboratories, Urbanol, after a single administration of 10 to 40 mg, has been shown to reach peak serum concentrations between one and five hours irrespective of the dose given. The original substance is eliminated from the serum with an initial half-life of five hours, and after the eighth hour, the half-life has been shown to be 41 hours.

In addition to the treatment of anxiety in neurotic patients — and for pre-operative medication — Urbanol may also be effective in relieving the acute symptoms of alcohol withdrawal. It does, however, have no specific usefulness in the treatment of psychotic patients.

Contraindicated in myocardial infarction, in infants and in patients with a known sensitivity to clobazam, the effect of urbanol may be enhanced by barbiturates, antihistamines, narcotics, and sedating antidepressants. Dosage should be adjusted accordingly.

Most frequently encountered side effects include drowsiness, dizziness, dry mouth and constipation.

Further information available from Roussel Laboratories (Pty) Ltd, P.O. Box 39110, Bramley, Transvaal.
For endogenous depression, anxiety

Lantanone (mianserin hydrochloride) is an antidepressant recommended therapy of all those cases of depressive illness where antidepressant treatment is indicated (eg. endogenous depression and depression with anxiety.)

Available from Organon Laboratories, Lantanone is particularly useful in alleviating symptoms of anxiety, sleep disturbances and somatic complaints. The active substance of Lantanone belongs to a series of compounds, the piperazinoazines, which are chemically not related to the commonly used 'tricyclic' antidepressants. Its structure lacks the basic side-chain which is considered to be responsible for the anti-cholinergic activity of the 'tricycles'. It is well established that the improvement of sleep disturbances and anxiety become apparent from the first day of treatment with Lantanone.

In a specially designed human study it was shown that Lantanone impaired psychomotor performance for the first days only. Depressed patients treated with psychotropic medicines should in general, avoid performance of such hazardous tasks as driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery. Lantanone may also enhance the effect of alcohol and patients should be advised accordingly.

Slight alterations of the glucose/tolerance curve have been observed in some patients with unstable diabetes mellitus who were treated with Lantanone and therefore in such patients regular monitoring of blood sugar levels is advisable. Depressed patients suffering from liver-, renal-, or cardiac insufficiency should in principle be carefully monitored whilst under drug therapy including Lantanone.

Further details are available from Organon (Pty) Ltd, Benmore Gardens, 11th Street, 1000 Benmore.

For further information circle No 209

Prolongs sleep, reduces nocturnal awakenings

Dalmadorm (flurazepam hydrochloride) or hypnotic produced by Roche Products, is effective in reducing the time until sleep onset, prolonging the total duration of sleep, reducing the number of nocturnal awakenings and improving the subjective quality of sleep.

Dalmadorm is indicated for all the usual forms of insomnia characterised by difficulty in falling asleep and frequent nocturnal or early morning awakenings. Furthermore, Dalmadorm can be used effectively in patients with irregular sleeping habits and in chronic illnesses requiring treatment for associated insomnia.

Apart from the rare cases of myasthenia gravis, there are no known contraindications.

On the usual therapeutic dose, no subjective side-effects occur as a rule, but elderly patients with organic cerebral changes are in general more sensitive. In exceptional cases, patients react paradoxically with restlessness and mild confusion to therapeutic doses. This phenomenon is common to all hypnotics - occasional nightmares and insomnia are also reported.

Further information is available from Roche Products (Pty) Ltd, 4 Brewery Street, Isando, Transvaal.

For further information circle No 210

Childhood behavioural disorders an indication

Produced by Searle Laboratories, Serenace (haloperidol) is a tranquilliser which is indicated in acute and chronic schizophrenia, mania and hypomania, organic psychoses, childhood behaviour disorders and motor tics.

It is thought that the behavioural effect of neuroleptic drugs is mediated through the inhibitory pathways of the extrapyramidal midbrain system. Haloperidol, a butyrophenone, may act by mimicking GABA and opposing the action of glutamic acid particularly in specific areas of the extrapyramidal system. Haloperidol blocks dopamine receptors, possibly by a feedback mechanism that increases dopamine turnover in the brain.

Where high dosage treatment is used, extrapyramidal side-effects may be encountered at an early stage in the form of dystonic reactions or motor restlessness (akathisia). Throtrycotic patients may be more prone to develop extrapyramidal symptoms.

Serenace should not be used alone where depression is predominant—it may be combined with anti-depressants to treat those conditions where anxiety and depression co-exist.

Further information is available from G D Searle (SA) (Pty) Ltd, 10 Mandy Road, Reuven, Johannesburg 2091.

For further information circle No 211

Reactive depressive disorder therapy

Demolox (amoxapine) is indicated for the relief of symptoms of depression in patients with neurotic or reactive depressive disorders as well as endogenous and psychotic depressions.

Produced by Lederle Laboratories, Demolox is an antidepressant agent with a mild sedative component to its action and, as with other tricyclic antidepressants, the mechanism of its clinical action in man is not well understood. The compound is absorbed rapidly and reaches peak blood levels approximately 90 minutes after ingestion. It is almost completely metabolised and the main route of excretion is by the kidney. In man, amoxapine has a serum half-life of approximately eight hours while the major metabolite, eight-hydroxyamoxapine, has a serum half-life of 30 hours.

Demolox is contra-indicated in patients who have shown a previous hypersensitivity to dibenzoxazepine compounds. It should not be given concomitantly with monoamine oxidase inhibitors, and also should not be administered to nursing mothers.

The compound is well tolerated by most patients and severe complications or adverse reactions are infrequent. Side-effects most often reported are sedative and anticholinergic effects, but these occurred in fewer than one-third of patients in clinical trials, were generally mild, and seldom required discontinuation of the drug.

As with other anti-depressants, Demolox should be used with caution in patients with a history of urinary retention, angle-closure glaucoma or increased intraocular pressure. Patients with cardiovascular disorders should also be watched closely.

Further information is available from Lederle Laboratories (Pty) Ltd., Elma Park, Edenvale, Transvaal.

For further information circle No 212