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GALANTAMINE IN THE TREATMENT OF ADULT AUTISM: A REPORT OF THREE CLINICAL CASES

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Abstract:

Objective: To study the usefulness of galantamine, a competitive, reversible acetylcholinesterase inhibitor (AChEI), in adults diagnosed with autism (in accordance with DSM-IV-TR Axis I clinical criteria) before age three years. Methods: To promote verbalization and meaningful speech sound production through biochemical enhancement of the serotonergic subsystem of the central nervous system (CNS), galantamine 4 mg qhs was administered, with indicated dose increases. Results: Verbal fluency increased in all patients, according to their caregivers. One patient developed a macular rash that abated when the medication was discontinued. After one month on donepezil 5 mg qhs, verbal and behavioral regression again led to discontinuation. Doses for the other patients have been escalated by 4 mg daily each month to a maximum of 12 mg, with improvement following each increase. Conclusions: Cholinergic stimulation of the CNS serotonergic subsystem with galantamine may enhance expressive language and communication in autistic adults. Clinical trials are needed to study adjuvant therapy with galantamine in such patients.