THE TREATMENT OF APHONIA BY THE INTRAVENOUS ADMINISTRATION OF PENTOTHAL SODIUM

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No report on a case of hysterical aphonia successfully treated by the intravenous administration of pentothal sodium has been found in the literature.

Barbiturates were first used in America in psychotherapy by Bleckwenn (1, 2) in 1929. Horsley, (3, 4) in 1936, used pentothal sodium in 2.5 per cent. solution for narco-analysis.

Case report: The patient was a healthy high school girl, with a chief complaint of being unable to talk for three months. The onset was a "cold." Stimulation of neck muscles with an electric vibrator and hypnosis had no effect. The patient became self-conscious and unhappy. There was no family history of hysteria. Past history revealed rheumatic fever with resultant cardiac enlargement and aortic and mitral murmurs. Laryngoscopic examination was negative.

A 2.5 per cent. solution of pentothal sodium was given sufficiently slowly by vein to keep the patient in a hypnotic state. Her response to questions were by lip movements. Occasionally, she uttered a faint sound. Her pharynx was painted with oil of cloves to which she responded with wry facial expressions and tears. At this time, 9 cc. of a 2.5 per cent. solution of pentothal sodium had been injected over a period of 25 minutes. The soles of her feet were then stimulated by scratching. The patient began to kick her feet and protested vocally. In a short time, she answered questions distinctly and slowly but with much effort. The following day, her voice was much stronger. Ten days later, her voice was normal. The patient has maintained her clinical recovery for ten months. Pentothal sodium, in this instance, proved to be a valuable adjunct in the treatment of a psychiatric syndrome.

REFERENCES


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