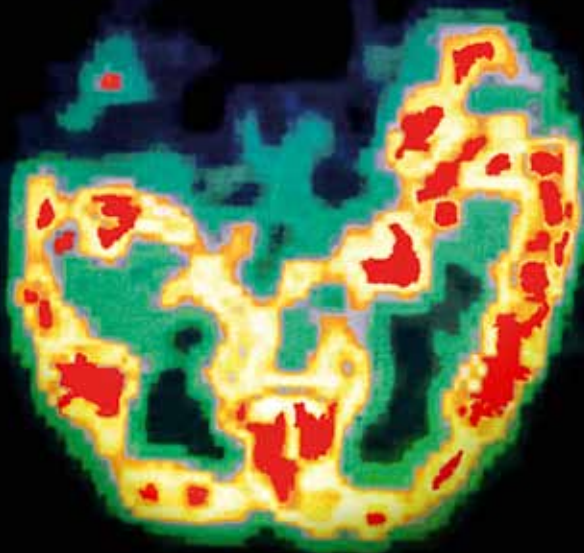


# Carbamazepine

Epilepsy (PET brain scan, right) is one of the conditions treated by carbamazepine



SPL

## GENERIC AND PROPRIETARY NAMES

- Carbamazepine: Tegretol; Carbagen SR; Tegretol Retard; Teril Retard.

## ACTION

- Inhibits nerve impulses.

## CLASSIFICATION

- Antiepileptic.

## INDICATIONS

- Partial/secondary generalised tonic-clonic seizures.
- Primary generalised seizures.
- Trigeminal neuralgia.
- Prophylaxis of bipolar disorder when unresponsive to lithium.

## CAUTIONS

- Hepatic/renal impairment.
- History of haematological reactions to other drugs.
- Skin reactions.
- Cardiac disease.
- Pregnancy and breastfeeding.
- Glaucoma.
- Avoid sudden withdrawal.
- Significant interactions with other drugs – check *British National Formulary* for details.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Atrioventricular conduction abnormalities (unless paced).
- History of bone marrow depression.
- Porphyria.

## COMMON SIDE-EFFECTS

- Nausea and vomiting.
- Dizziness.
- Headache.
- Ataxia.
- Confusion and agitation – especially in older people.
- Problems with vision.
- Constipation.
- Diarrhoea.
- Anorexia.
- Rash.
- Blood disorders, including leucopenia, agranulocytosis, aplastic anaemia.

## RARER SIDE-EFFECTS

- Cholestatic jaundice.
- Hepatitis.
- Stevens-Johnson syndrome.
- Toxic epidermal necrolysis.
- Alopecia.
- Thromboembolism.
- Arthralgia.
- Fever.
- Proteinuria.
- Lymph node enlargement.

- Cardiac conduction disturbances.
- Dyskinesias.
- Paraesthesia.
- Depression.
- Impotence.
- Gynaecomastia
- Galactorrhoea.
- Aggression.
- Triggering of psychosis.
- Photosensitivity.
- Pulmonary hypersensitivity.
- Hyponatraemia.
- Oedema.

## ADMINISTRATION

- Oral.
- Suppositories.

## NURSING CONSIDERATIONS

- Observe for confusion and agitation in older people.
- Observe for changes in mental state.
- Observe for allergic reactions such as rashes, purpura.
- Leucopenia which is severe, progressive or associated with clinical symptoms requires withdrawal.

## PATIENT TEACHING

- Teach patient signs of blood, liver or skin disorders.
- Seek immediate medical attention if fever, sore throat, rash, mouth ulcers, bruising or bleeding develop.
- Take a missed dose as soon as possible. If the next is due within two hours, take a single dose immediately and miss the next.
- Take with food to avoid gastrointestinal complications.
- Avoid driving or operating machinery in the first three days of treatment.
- Alcohol can exacerbate sedative effects.

## REFERENCES

- Henry, J. (ed) (2004) *The British Medical Association New Guide to Medicines and Drugs*. London: Dorling Kindersley.
- Mehta, D.K. et al (eds) (2005) *British National Formulary*. London: BMA/Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain.

Nurses should refer to manufacturer's summary of product characteristics and to appropriate local guidelines