

ANTIEPILEPTIC DRUG TREATMENT IN 1959

The two decades between 1938 and 1958 were notable for a large number of new medicinal compounds. Phenytoin was of course the most important, but other drugs, some of which are still prescribed, were introduced at this time. Not only drugs – for the ketogenic diet was also popularised in this period. Lennox in his book in 1960 gave a long treatise on drug therapy. Heading his list were the bromides, which he found rather ineffective, but barbiturates were greeted enthusiastically. Lennox mentioned that 2,500 compounds had been synthesised, and of these 50 compounds were marketed of which phenobarbital was the most frequently used for epilepsy. He was also enthusiastic about phenytoin, especially for patients *‘with long-standing convulsions previously unrelieved by phenobarbital’* although Mesantoin outranked it on several points, and indeed he favoured their combined use: *‘Mesantoin and Dilantin are Damon and Pythias in respect to their suitability for joint action. Similarity of action gives a doubled therapeutic effect; the dissimilarity of their side reactions keeps these within bounds.’* Phenacemide was *‘what in athletics might be called a triple threat because, more than any other drug, it acts against each of the three main types of seizures, and especially against the most feared psychomotor seizures. However, it is also a triple threat to the patient himself because of possible effect on the marrow, the liver or the psyche.’* Given one chance in 250 of not surviving this treatment, he asked, *‘Is the risk too great?’* Trimethadione (Tridione) *‘heads the list of drugs that are peculiarly beneficial to persons subject to petits’*. Other drugs mentioned by Lennox included acetazolamide (which he considered lacked staying power), primidone (*‘a welcome contribution from abroad’*), methsuximide (like *‘a pusher locomotive’*), paramethadione, phensuximide, ethosuximide, quinacine and metharbital.

Drugs introduced into clinical practice between 1938 and 1958

1938	<i>Dilantin</i>	<i>Phenytoin</i>
1941	<i>Diamox</i>	<i>Acetazolamide</i>
1946	<i>Tridione</i>	<i>Trimethadione</i>
1947	<i>Mesantoin</i>	<i>Mephenytoin</i>
1949	<i>Paradione</i>	<i>Paramethadione</i>
1950	<i>Thiantoin</i>	<i>Phethenylate</i>
1951	<i>Phenurone</i>	<i>Phenacemide</i>
1952	<i>Gemonil</i>	<i>Metharbital</i>
1952	<i>Hibicon</i>	<i>Benzchlorpropamide</i>
1953	<i>Milontin</i>	<i>Phensuximide</i>
1954	<i>Mysoline</i>	<i>Primidone</i>
1957	<i>Peganone</i>	<i>Ethotoin</i>
1957	<i>Celontin</i>	<i>Methsuximide</i>
1958	<i>Zarontin</i>	<i>Ethosuximide</i>