Frequency of Sodium Valproate-Induced Hair Loss and Curly Hair

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ABSTRACT

Sodium valproate has been widely used by man as an antiepileptic drug. Hair loss and curly hair is a rare side effect of sodium valproate. We have conducted a prospective clinical study in the Department of Neurology in Shafa Hospital, Kerman, Iran for ten years (1994-2004). All 211 epileptic patients in our study were given sodium valproate as a single drug treatment. During the course of therapy, all patients were strictly monitored every 3 months. Six cases (3.5% of valproate user population) of hair loss and curling of hair were found between sodium valproate users. Three cases were female and three were male. This side effect observed at least 3 months after its first initial drug therapy. The estimated frequency of curly hair along with hair loss in our study is lower than previously-reported frequencies (6-12%).

Keywords: Curly hair, Sodium valproate, Epilepsy

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a prospective clinical study on patients who used sodium valproate for 10 years in the Department of Neurology, Shafa Hospital, Kerman, Iran (1994-2004). All the 211 epileptic patients have been taking up sodium valproate as a single agent. During the course of therapy, all patients were strictly monitored every 3 months. Sodium valproate was started at lowest therapeutic dose. The dose was gradually increased to avoid some undesirable adverse effect. Appropriate dose was selected based on the lowest dose disappearing epileptic attack. All patients were examined for hair abnormality and when found, therapeutic plan was changed to another anticonvulsant drug. The term “diffuse hair loss” has been used in patients with more than 40% reduction in scalp hair.

RESULTS

Among 211 patients who received sodium valproate (enteric coated tablet), 51% were male and 49% were female (no significant difference). Patients’ mean age of epilepsy onset was 11 years old and mean age starting to receive sodium valproate was 18 years old. More than 78% of patients had experienced tonic-clonic seizures (primary or secondary). All patients received monotherapy (single drug treatment). Overall, there were 6 cases...
Sodium valproate can be used in the treatment of epilepsy. Curly hair associated with hair loss is uncommon. The derangement can be observed 3 months after starting dose or later. But in some cases it takes 1 year or 2 years before hair loss and curly hair appears. Younger patients have higher incidence of hair loss and curling.

Based on current study, sodium valproate can cause hair loss and curliness but this is a reversible side effect. The original and normal texture of hair will appear after discontinuation of sodium valproate.

**REFERENCES**


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