

TABLETTE VIR DIE BEHANDELING VAN DIABETES

Tolbutamied (rastinon, artosin) word tans baie in hierdie land gebruik vir die behandeling van diabetes. Dit het die gebruik van die oorspronklike karbutamied feitlik heeltemal vervang. Karbutamied was sterker maar ook meer giftig. Daar is geen afdoende bewys dat tolbutamied ooit agranulositose veroorsaak het nie; trouens, dit het skynbaar soms net lige tydelike leukopenie veroorsaak. Lige huidsuitslag kom voor, maar dit is gewoonlik nie nodig om die toediening van die middel hieroor te staak nie. Sommige pasiënte hou nie van die middel nie om vae redes—hoofpyn, naarheid, en so meer; maar hierdie klagtes kom gewoonlik nie meer voor as wat sou gebeur het indien 'n troosmiddel in plaas van tolbutamied gebruik is nie.

Dr. Lawrence¹ vertel die ongewone storie van 'n effens gesette man van 62 wat 19 jaar lank lige diabetes gehad het. Hy het tolbutamied, 1·5 g. daagliks, 'n paar weke lank geneem met 'n goeie uitwerking op sy bloedsuiker, toe hy 'n vergrote lewer, 'n ernstige graad van gestippelde edeem van die bene, en askites ontwikkel het. Daar was nie geelsug nie. Die toediening van tolbutamied is gestaak en na 'n week van rus in die bed en die gebruik van asetazolamied het die pasiënt ten volle herstel. Dit is glad nie duidelik dat die skade deur die betrokke middel veroorsaak is nie, en selfs as dit die geval was, sou dit 'n unieke geval uit tienduisende wees. By proefdiere is lewerskade nie deur tolbutamied veroorsaak nie, alhoewel sommige van die verwante antidiabetiese samestellings (bv. chlorpropamied) bepaald 'n giftige uitwerking op die lewer gehad het, veral by honde. Die verslag van hierdie enkele geval hoef ons dus nie te verhoed om tolbutamied te gebruik nie.

Die uitwerking van hierdie sulfonamied-verwante middels is nog onbekend, maar prakties kan dit as geldig aanvaar word dat hulle die produksie van insulien stimuleer of dat hulle die uitwerking van die endogene insulien wat wel voortegebring word, versterk. Hulle kan insulien *nie* vervang nie en dit lyk nie of hulle die uitwerking van insulien wat ingespuit word, versterk nie. Die middels is waardeloos vir die soort diabetes wat by jong persone voorkom—daardie pasiënte wat onderhewig is aan ketose; trouens die gebruik van sulke middels by hierdie soort geval is definitief nie aangewese nie. Oor die algemeen het die sulfonamied-verwante middels geen waarde as hulle saam met insulien gebruik word nie; hulle help ook nie om moeilik beheerbare diabetes in bedwang te hou nie. Selfs in die ouer soort pasiënt is die waarde van dié middels twyfelagtig. As die diabetes van 'n pasiënt goed onder beheer gehou kan word deur sowel insulien as tolbutamied, is dit waarskynlik dat die toestand net so goed beheer sou kon word as enigeen van hierdie middels alleen gebruik word. Een van hierdie middels is dus eintlik onaktief.

Dit is teleurstellend dat 'n toenemende aantal pasiënte wat aan die begin goed met tolbutamied beheer is, weer 'n stygging van bloedsuiker toon na maande of jare van behandeling. Hierdie 'sekondêre mislukking' van tolbutamied

is 'n werklike verskynsel en nie noodwendig verwant aan enige onreëlmataheid van die dieet of toename van die pasiënt se gewig nie. Die redes hiervoor is nie voor die hand liggend nie. Daar skyn geen bewys te wees van skade aan die pankreas, en dus verergering van die diabetes nie. Byvoorbeeld, die hoeveelheid insulien benodig na die mislukking van tolbutamied is meer as wat dit voor die tyd was; ook het Gepts^a op grond van outopsiestudies gevind dat die histologiese toestand van die pankreas na behandeling met karbutamied of tolbutamied geensins swakker is as die pankreas van soortgelyke pasiënte wat net met insulien of dieet behandel is nie. Trouens, by een of twee sulke pasiënte het dit hom opgeval dat hulle pankreasselfs tekens toon van regenerasie van aktiewe korrelagtige betaselle. Regenerasie word nie gewoonlik by hierdie soort pasiënt aangetref nie, en dit kan dus 'n aanduiding wees dat die betrokke middels die neiging toon om 'n abnormale pankreas te laat herstel. Daar is egter geen kliniese bewys van die verligting van die basiese diabetiese toestand deur die gebruik van tolbutamied nie. Die middel kan by geleentheid weerhou word sonder dat die beheer van die pasiënt se diabetiese toestand verswak; dit gebeur egter ook in die geval van insulien en mag maar slegs wisselinge in die verloop van die siekte weerspieël.

Tot dusver is daar geen bewys dat diabetiese pasiënte wat met tolbutamied behandel word meer of minder onderhewig is aan die sogenaamde bloedvat-komplikasies^b van die siekte nie. Tolbutamied het geen uitwerking op die cholesterol in die serum nie.

Chlorpropamied (diabinese) het 'n sterk chemiese ooreenkoms met tolbutamied en dit werk skynbaar op dieselfde manier, maar dit is sterker. Dit kan 'n ernstige graad van hipoglisemie veroorsaak en moet nie in groter dosisse as 500 mg. gebruik word nie. Die uitwerking van die middel is langer, sodat genoeg daarvan vir die hele dag in een dosis gegee kan word. Behalwe lige skynbaar afwykings van lewerfunksietoetse toon en selfs geelsug van die soort wat gevind is met die gebruik van largactil. Dit is dus nie 'n middel wat onoordeelkundig gebruik moet word nie en, soos tolbutamied, kan dit slegs gebruik word vir pasiënte wat nie onderhewig is aan ketose nie. Dit het die voordeel dat dit die bloedsuiker verlaag by sommige diabetiese pasiënte waar tolbutamied nie geslaag het nie.

Die samestelling bekend as DBI (fenetielbiguanied) is chemies onverwant aan hierdie middels en verlaag die bloedsuiker deur anerobiese glikolise te verhoog. Dit is effektiel in sommige pasiënte met ernstige diabetes, wat ook geneig is tot ketose, maar dit veroorsaak onhoudbare gastro-intestinale irritasie in baie gevalle. Die plek van hierdie middel by die behandeling van diabetes is twyfelagtig, maar die verwagting is dat dit 'n sekere waarde kan hê by die behandeling van moeilik-beheerbare pasiënte wat maklik in koma verval.

Op die oomblik skyn dit redelik te wees om die gebruik van tolbutamied te probeer in gevalle van die ouer soort diabetiese pasiënt wat nie ketose gehad het nie en in wie se geval dleetmaatreëls alleen nie genoeg is om die glisemie te beheer nie. Voordat besluit word om hierdie middel vir 'n onbepaalde tyd te gebruik, moet dit duidelik wees dat dit effektief is, en daar moet gelet word op die moontlikheid

van sekondêre mislukkinge. Chlorpropamide kan gebruik word in plaas van insulien indien tolbutamied nie slaag nie, maar die geneesheer moet bewus wees van die moontlike giftige gevolge.

1. Lawrence, R. D. (1959): Brit. Med. J., 1, 644.

2. Gepts, W. (1957): *Contribution à l'Étude Morphologique des îlots de Langerhans au Cours du Diabète*. Les éditions ,Acta Medica Belgica'.

SECOND THOUGHTS ON TABLETS FOR DIABETES

Tolbutamide (rastinon, artosin) is at present widely used in this country in the treatment of diabetes. It has virtually supplanted the original carbutamide, which, although somewhat more powerful, was distinctly more toxic. It is not definitely established that tolbutamide has ever caused agranulocytosis; in fact it only very rarely appears to produce a mild and temporary leucopenia. Minor skin rashes do occur, but do not usually necessitate the withdrawal of the drug. Some patients complain of 'not liking the new tablets' for vague reasons—headache, nausea and so on, but it is quite probable that such complaints are no more frequent than would be found if a placebo had been used in place of the tolbutamide.

An unusual story has been told by Dr. Lawrence,¹ concerning a moderately obese man of 62 who had had mild diabetes for 19 years. He had been receiving tolbutamide in a dosage of 1·5 g. daily for some weeks, with good effect on his blood sugar, when he developed an enlarged liver, with gross pitting oedema of the legs and ascites. He was not jaundiced. The tolbutamide administration was stopped, and after a week's bed rest and some acetazolamide the patient had fully recovered. The evidence here is by no means conclusive that the damage was caused by the drug—even if it were so it appears to be a unique case out of many tens of thousands. In experimental animals, liver damage has not been produced by tolbutamide, although some of the related antidiabetic compounds (e.g. chlorpropamide) have proved definitely toxic to the liver, specifically in dogs. In any event, this single case report should not deter one from the use of tolbutamide in general.

The mode of action of these sulphonamide derivatives is still uncertain, but from a practical point of view it may be taken as a working hypothesis that they act by stimulating the production of insulin or enhancing the effect of whatever endogenous insulin is being produced. They are not able to replace insulin in any way and do not appear to enhance the effect of injected insulin. They are quite valueless in the young variety of diabetes—in those patients who are subject to ketosis—in fact their employment in this type of person is definitely contra-indicated. In general they are of no value when used in addition to insulin—they do not help to control the 'brittle' case, and even in the older type of patient the value of the mixture is very doubtful. If a patient is well controlled on both insulin and tolbutamide, it is most likely that he (or she) would be equally well controlled on one or other used alone—in other words one of the two drugs is a sleeping partner.

It is disappointing that an increasing number of patients who are satisfactorily controlled on tolbutamide at first again show a rise in blood sugar after months or even years of treatment. This 'secondary failure' of tolbutamide is a

real phenomenon, and not necessarily related to any dietary laxity or increase in the patients' weight. The reason for it is not obvious. There appears to be no evidence that the pancreas becomes damaged, so worsening the diabetes. For one thing, after a tolbutamide failure, insulin requirement is no more than it had been previously and, secondly, Gepts,² by means of autopsy studies, has found that the histological state of the pancreas after carbutamide or tolbutamide therapy appears in no way worse than the pancreas of similar patients who had been treated with insulin or diet only. In fact he observed a remarkable feature in one or two of such patients—namely that their pancreases actually showed evidence of regeneration of active, granular beta cells. Regeneration is not normally seen in this type of patient, and might be taken as suggesting that the drugs concerned actually tend to produce repair of the abnormal pancreas. There is, however, no clinical evidence of amelioration of the basic diabetic condition by tolbutamide. Occasionally the drug may be discontinued without worsening of the patient's diabetic control, but this may also be seen with insulin and perhaps merely reflects fluctuations in the course of the disease.

There is so far no evidence to indicate any change in the liability to the vascular 'complications' of diabetes in patients who are being treated with tolbutamide. It has no effect on the serum cholesterol.

Chlorpropamide (diabinese) is chemically very similar to tolbutamide, and apparently acts in the same way, but is more powerful. It is capable of producing severe hypoglycaemia, and should not be used in doses larger than 500 mg. per day. Its effect is much longer lasting, so that the day's requirement can be given in one dose. Apart from mild side-effects it can apparently cause abnormalities in liver-function tests and even jaundice, probably resembling that associated with largactil. It is not, therefore, a compound to be used indiscriminately and, like tolbutamide, it can only be used in those patients who are not liable to ketosis. Its advantage is that it may be effective in lowering the blood sugar in some diabetics in whom tolbutamide has failed.

The compound known as DBI (phenethylbiguanide) is chemically unrelated and reduces blood sugar by enhancing anaerobic glycolysis. It is effective in some severely diabetic, ketosis-prone patients, but produces intolerable gastrointestinal irritation in a very high proportion of subjects. Its place in the treatment of diabetes is uncertain, but it might be hoped that it will have some value in rendering more easily controlled the extremely brittle patient who wanders so readily in and out of one or other sort of coma.

At the present time it would appear reasonable to try tolbutamide in the older type of diabetic who has not had ketosis, and in whom dietary measures alone are insufficient to control the glycaemia. It must have become clear that this drug is effective before it is indefinitely continued, and

watch must be kept for secondary failures. Chlorpropamide, instead of insulin, may be tried if tolbutamide fails, but the physician must be aware of its possible toxic effects.

1. Lawrence, R. D. (1959): Brit. Med. J., 1, 644.
2. Gepts, W. (1957): *Contribution à l'Étude Morphologique des Ilots de Langerhans au Cours de Diabète*. Les éditions 'Acta Medica Belgica'.