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Catatonic schizophrenia and the use of memantine.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE: To report a case of **catatonic schizophrenia** treated with **memantine** that resulted in a rapid reduction of **catatonic** symptoms.

CASE SUMMARY: A 68-year-old male with **catatonic schizophrenia** presented with bizarre and **catatonic** behavior manifested by mutism, waxy flexibility, immobility, staring, nonresponsiveness to verbal commands, grimacing, rigidity, and posturing. During the course of his hospitalization, he was treated with **memantine** up to 10 mg/day. The catatonia responded rapidly and significantly to **memantine**.

DISCUSSION: Few treatment options are available for the management of catatonia. Lorazepam is generally the agent that has been used most often and has had varying degrees of success. Our report adds to a recently published case that also suggested that **memantine** might be useful for the management of **catatonic** behaviors in a patient with **schizophrenia**. While its mechanism of action is unknown, it has been thought that glutamate antagonists, such as **memantine**, may be beneficial in **catatonic schizophrenia** due to a glutamatergic dysfunction present in **catatonic** patients. It also has been hypothesized that there is a decrease in gamma-aminobutyric acid released to the supplementary motor areas, resulting in less glutamate inhibition. This results in a net effect of glutamatergic hyperfunction in the striatum, which may produce catatonia. Based on this hypothesis, **memantine** would be beneficial as an N-methyl-D-aspartic acid antagonist to decrease the amount of glutamate in the striatum and thereby relieve symptoms of catatonia. However, these potential benefits must be weighed against recently reported adverse reactions associated with **memantine** use, namely, psychosis and seizures.

CONCLUSIONS: **Memantine** produced a rapid and significant reduction in **catatonic** symptoms in our patient with **catatonic schizophrenia**.

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