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Hare EH (1955). Comparative efficacy of hypnotics: a self-controlled, self-recorded clinical trial in neurotic patients. *British Journal of Preventive and Social Medicine* 9:140-146.

Key passages

Brit. J. prev. soc. Med. (1955), 9, 140-146.

COMPARATIVE EFFICACY OF HYPNOTICS
A SELF-CONTROLLED, SELF-RECORDED CLINICAL TRIAL IN
NEUROTIC PATIENTS

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ADMINISTRATION OF HYPNOTICS

Four separate comparative trials were made, as follows:

(i) *Trial A* (six subjects).—The effect of butobarbitone gr. 3 was compared with that of carbromal gr. 12 and also with that of a lactose placebo. The capsules containing these drugs were all identical in appearance, but half of the capsules were coloured red and half were coloured blue. They were administered in a pre-arranged random order (known only to the dispenser), such that over a period of eighteen nights a patient would receive each drug six times, three times in a red capsule and three times in a blue. The patients were not told they were receiving different types of drug; to minimize the chance of their noticing a difference in taste, the capsules were taken under the supervision of the night-nurse and the patients were asked to swallow them whole with a drink of water. To ensure that each patient had the correct capsules, these were sent from the dispensary in separate envelopes on which was written the name of the patient and the date on which the dose was to be taken.

(ii) *Trial B* (five subjects).—Sodium butobarbitone gr. 3 was compared with methylpentenol 0.3 g. and with a placebo. As methylpentenol is a liquid, it is administered in special soft elastic gelatine capsules. It was therefore necessary to administer the other drugs in a similar manner; to this end, arachis oil was used as a placebo, and the sodium butobarbitone was dissolved in propylene glycol (butobarbitone is insufficiently soluble for this purpose and therefore could not be used).

(iii) *Trial C* (thirteen subjects).—Sodium butobarbitone gr. 3 was compared with methylpentenol 0.5 g. No placebo control was used.

(iv) *Trial D* (six subjects).—Sodium butobarbitone gr. 3 was compared with carbromal gr. 12, without a placebo control. The drugs were administered in differently coloured capsules as in Trial A. As 3 gr. sodium butobarbitone is equivalent in barbiturate content to 2.72 gr. butobarbitone, we should expect to find that the efficacy of the barbiturate as compared with carbromal would be less in Trial D than in Trial A.