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Triamterene in the Treatment of Hypertension: More Than Just Potassium Sparing?

Gerard W. Smetana, M.D.

Department of General Medicine and Endocrinology, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA

Hypertension is the most commonly uncontrolled chronic medical condition in primary care practice and is a major risk factor for stroke and coronary artery disease. For decades, thiazide diuretics have been a recommended first-line option for antihypertensive therapy. The seventh report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure (JNC 7) recommended thiazide diuretics as first-line therapy due to compelling evidence of their effectiveness in patients with hypertension.

Triamterene is a thiazide diuretic that acts as a potassium-sparing diuretic. It is used in the treatment of hypertension to reduce blood pressure and to prevent the development of hyperkalemia. Triamterene is available in oral tablets and is usually taken with food or milk to minimize its side effects, particularly gastrointestinal discomfort.

Triamterene is a potassium-sparing diuretic, which means that it increases the excretion of sodium and water in the kidneys while retaining potassium. This effect helps to lower blood pressure by reducing the volume of blood and the total blood volume in the body. It is often used in combination with other antihypertensive medications such as angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, angiotensin receptor blockers, or calcium channel blockers.

In addition to its role as a diuretic, triamterene may also have a renin-angiotensin aldosterone system (RAAS) inhibitor effect due to its potassium-sparing properties. This action can help to reduce blood pressure by blocking the production of angiotensin II, which is a potent vasoconstrictor and aldosterone secretagogue.

Despite its effectiveness, triamterene has some potential side effects, such as gastrointestinal disturbances like nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. It is important to monitor blood potassium levels carefully to prevent hyperkalemia, which can occur if potassium levels become too high.

Triamterene is generally well tolerated and has a low incidence of adverse reactions. However, patients should be monitored for any signs of hyperkalemia, and the dosage should be adjusted accordingly.

References:


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Last edited by pbushley on 6/17/2015

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