

Ettinger

INTERNAL MEDICINE
NEWS
ROCKVILLE, MD.
\$5M! MONTHLY \$2,200

JUN 15 1984
BURRELLE'S

Begins Antiemetic Therapy Before Ca Chemotherapy

International Medical News Service

BALTIMORE — Antiemetic therapy should be instituted before the start of chemotherapy in cancer patients, it should be continuous, and it should be tailored to each patient's special needs, Dr. David S. Ettinger said at the J. Donald Woodruff gynecologic oncology symposium presented by the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Control of nausea and vomiting in patients undergoing chemotherapy is essential because these symptoms interfere with nutrition and patient activity and may adversely affect the treatment as well as reducing host resistance,

said Dr. Ettinger, of the university.

Patients receiving chemotherapy require a great deal of reassurance and support. Most prefer undergoing treatment late in the day when any nausea or vomiting they might experience would be less disruptive of their activities.

The side effects of the various antiemetic drugs may be classified as parasympatholytic, including dry mouth, constipation, urinary retention, and blurred vision; adrenolytic, including orthostatic hypotension and vasomotor collapse; and causing CNS disturbances, including drowsiness and extrapyramidal signs and symptoms.

The phenothiazines have been considered the standard for the treatment of nausea and vomiting; however, the more potent the drug, the greater the extrapyramidal side effects, Dr. Ettinger said.

The active ingredient of marijuana, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), has been found highly effective in preventing nausea; however, its side effects include somnolence, dysphoria, inability to concentrate, dizziness, and blurred vision.

In a study at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, synthetic THC was found to be more effective than placebo in 10 patients who had not been helped by

other antiemetics. Younger patients tolerated the drug better than did older patients, possibly because they had previously smoked marijuana, Dr. Ettinger said.

Results of most studies demonstrate that THC is an effective antiemetic. However, the results of a study of 111 patients at the Mayo Clinic showed that THC was only as effective as compazine in controlling nausea and vomiting but that THC was associated with more side effects.

However, the average age of the 111 patients was about 60 years, and the results might have been different if the patients had been younger, he said.

Marijuana appears to be effective in controlling nausea and vomiting, but it is no panacea, he said.