

A Clinical Trial of Adjuvant Allopurinol Therapy for Moderately Refractory Schizophrenia

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Objective: To evaluate the xanthine oxidase inhibitor allopurinol as an adjuvant treatment for patients with moderately refractory schizophrenia, with the objective of increasing the endogenous pool of purines, including the neuro-modulator adenosine.

Method: A double-blind, placebo-controlled, crossover clinical trial of add-on allopurinol (300 mg b.i.d.) for poorly responsive schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder (DSM-IV criteria) was conducted. Thirty-five patients were enrolled, of whom 22 completed the 12 weeks of the study. Eighteen of these patients also completed a P50 evoked potential evaluation.

Results: Allopurinol was well tolerated and produced significant improvement in Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS) total, positive, negative, and general scores, particularly for positive symptoms compared with baseline and with placebo phase. Nine patients improved more than 20% in PANSS total score during allopurinol treatment, whereas none responded in the placebo phase. Responders had a shorter duration of illness than nonresponders. P50 auditory sensory gating failed to improve with allopurinol treatment.

Conclusions: Allopurinol was an effective and well-tolerated adjuvant treatment for poorly responsive schizophrenia, especially for refractory positive symptoms.

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Clinical trials of adjuvant treatments to antipsychotics for the treatment of schizophrenia have not been successful,^{1–3} with the exception of add-on *N*-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) co-agonists and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) for negative and general symptoms.^{4,5} Nevertheless, clozapine stands as the only well-established treatment for treatment-resistant schizophrenia, with efficacy for refractory positive symptoms, but not without safety, tolerability, and cost drawbacks.⁶

Allopurinol is a xanthine oxidase inhibitor routinely used to treat hyperuricemia and gout. However, previous studies and clinical observations have suggested its potential to treat refractory epilepsy,⁷ mania,⁸ and aggressive behavior in patients with neurologic disorders⁹ and dementia.¹⁰ In a case series study, our group has also reported the efficacy of add-on allopurinol in 5 of 11 treatment-resistant schizophrenic patients with unchanged antipsychotic dosages.¹¹ This pharmacologic strategy was based on the hypoadenosinergic hypothesis for schizophrenia,^{12,13} which links the dopaminergic and glutamatergic alterations since adenosine is a neuromodulator of both systems. By inhibiting the enzyme xanthine oxidase, the last step in purine degradation to uric acid, allopurinol can promote salvage of purines, possibly increasing the pool of purines, including adenosine.

The aim of the present study was to investigate the efficacy of allopurinol as adjuvant treatment for poorly responsive schizophrenia within the framework of a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, crossover design. Besides symptom evaluation, a P50 evoked potential was performed as a parameter of sensory gating, which has been shown to improve during treatment with clozapine, but not other atypical antipsychotics.^{14,15}

METHOD

Subjects

Patients diagnosed with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder according to DSM-IV by using a diagnostic checklist were considered moderately refractory on the basis of the following criteria: (1) persistence of psychotic symptoms after 2 or more distinct periods of treatment for at least 6 weeks with 2 different antipsychotics, in doses equivalent to a minimum of 400 mg/day of chlorpromazine.

zine,¹⁶ (2) no period of good functioning within 5 years or since onset of the disorder, and (3) a minimum Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS)¹⁷ total score of 60. Prior to study entry, subjects had to be receiving stable treatment with optimal doses of any antipsychotic, except for clozapine, for at least 2 months and could not have abused alcohol or illicit substances during the past 6 months. Adjuvant medications such as benzodiazepines, antidepressants, and mood stabilizers (lithium, valproate, or carbamazepine) were not discontinued, and patients were encouraged to continue under the supervision of their regular psychiatrists in addition to study evaluations. Psychiatrists were informed of study conditions and could suggest early termination of the study on clinical grounds. Hematology, blood chemistry, and liver and kidney functions were assessed before entry. Patients with concurrent medical, neurologic, or other psychiatric disorders were excluded. Thirty-five patients were enrolled in the study. The institutional review board approved the study, and all subjects and a legal guardian gave written informed consent to participate.

Study Design, Drug Treatment, and Clinical Assessment

Patients who satisfied the criteria described were randomly assigned to receive, under double-blind conditions, either allopurinol 300 mg b.i.d. or placebo in identical-appearing capsules in addition to their regular psychotropic medication, which remained unaltered throughout the study. After completion of the first treatment phase for 6 weeks, patients crossed over to the alternate adjuvant treatment for another 6 weeks.

Symptoms and extrapyramidal symptoms were assessed using the PANSS¹⁷ and the Extrapyramidal Symptom Rating Scale¹⁸ at weeks 0, 3, 6, 9, and 12 by 2 board-certified psychiatrists (M.G.B. and D.R.L.) trained specifically for application of these scales, with interrater correlation of $r > 0.9$ for all scales after independent evaluation of 5 patients (not from this sample) by both raters. The same research psychiatrist evaluated each patient for the duration of the study. Patients were withdrawn from the study if any alteration in medication dosages or use of an illicit drug of abuse occurred. Compliance was estimated by counting remaining capsules (at least 80% of the capsules had to be taken) every 3 weeks and retrospectively by uric acid determination at baseline and 6 and 12 weeks. Patients were also encouraged to be assessed at weeks 0, 6, and 12 for the P50 auditory evoked potential.

Electrophysiologic Recordings

The method for electrophysiologic recordings of the P50 evoked potential was as described by our group in a previous work that replicated the classical findings for schizophrenia.¹⁹ In brief, subjects were recorded seated,

relaxed, and awake with eyes open. Electroencephalographic (EEG) activity was recorded from a disk electrode affixed to the vertex (Cz) and referenced to both ears. Electroencephalogram was provided using a Nihon Kohden MEM-4104K system (Nihon Kohden; Tokyo, Japan) in 4 channels for recording of evoked responses integrated with auditory stimulator. The mean signal was registered in 2 channels, one for each side of the cranium, and amplified 20,000 times with a bandpass filter between 10 Hz and 10 kHz. EEG data were collected for 1000 ms for each paired stimulus presented. Additional channels were used to record the electro-oculogram (EOG) between the superior orbita and lateral canthus. Trials were rejected if they contained artifacts indicated by an EEG tension of $\pm 100 \mu\text{V}$ over the area of P50 for evoked potentials or the EOG recordings.

Auditory stimuli were presented in a conditioning-test paradigm with an interpair interval of 500 ms and intertrial interval of 10 seconds. A 0.1-ms square wave pulse was amplified in the auditory frequencies (20–12,000 Hz) and delivered through earphones that produce 1 ms of sound with an intensity of 60 dB sound pressure level over the auditory acuity threshold. Thirty non-rejected waves were added together to give a grand average signal, which was used for analysis. Two grand average waves were collected in sequence, and the mean of both was considered for analysis. The most positive peak between 40 and 90 ms after the conditioning stimulus was selected as the P50 final latency, and the wave amplitude (S_1) was measured relative to the previous negativity, determining the initial latency and the first P50 wave. The second wave (test) was determined using the corresponding peak, almost always between 500 ± 10 ms away from latency of the first wave form (conditioning), and its amplitude (S_2) was also measured relative to the previous negative peak.

Recordings were made and tracings were analyzed by a blinded researcher (E.S.G.), so that the test peaks that were away from the predicted interval (approximately 5%) were not overlooked. Averages with no discernible conditioning P50 waves were excluded from analysis. P50 ratios were calculated by dividing the test by the conditioning P50 amplitudes (S_2/S_1), thus representing a percentage.

Statistical Analysis

Treatment response for each treatment phase was defined as more than 20% improvement in PANSS scores compared with baseline (week 0) for the first treatment assigned and compared with the last evaluation before crossover (week 6) for the second treatment. To be considered for analysis, patients had to complete at least 9 weeks of the trial. Baseline comparisons between groups were performed using the *t* test for continuous variables and the Fisher exact test for categorical variables. Primary outcome analysis consisted of separate repeated-measures

Table 1. Baseline Characteristics of Patients Assigned to Allopurinol or Placebo First^a

| Characteristic | Allopurinol First (N = 12) | Placebo First (N = 11) | p |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----|
| Sex, N, male/female | 7/5 | 7/4 | .99 |
| Age, y | 35.3 ± 9.1 | 42.3 ± 12.9 | .14 |
| Duration of illness, y | 18.3 ± 8.7 | 24.2 ± 11.3 | .18 |
| Antipsychotic dose, mg/d | 550 ± 270 | 545 ± 408 | .97 |
| PANSS score | | | |
| Total | 82.3 ± 14.3 | 83.5 ± 15.4 | .85 |
| Positive symptoms | 23.4 ± 4.9 | 20.5 ± 5.2 | .17 |
| Negative symptoms | 21.1 ± 5.8 | 25.1 ± 7.7 | .16 |
| General symptoms | 37.8 ± 6.1 | 37.9 ± 7.7 | .98 |
| Uric acid, mg/dL | 4.4 ± 1.6 | 5.0 ± 2.1 | .48 |

^aValues are shown as mean ± SD unless otherwise noted.

Abbreviation: PANSS = Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale.

multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) for total, positive, negative, and general PANSS scores. Secondary analysis evaluated (1) absolute and relative (percentage) change in PANSS scores during treatment with allopurinol or placebo, considered independently; (2) total score changes for the first phase of treatment only, compared using a t test with the last observation carried forward (LOCF); and (3) relationships between baseline characteristics in responders versus nonresponders, analyzed using t tests. The P50 ratio was analyzed with the Friedman test. Statistical analysis (2-tailed) was performed using the SPSS 11.0 for Windows program (SPSS Inc., Chicago, Ill.), and an alpha level of .05 was used for tests of significance. Values are reported as mean ± SD.

RESULTS

Thirty-five patients (26 outpatients and 9 institutionalized patients, 33 with schizophrenia and 2 with schizoaffective disorder) were enrolled and 22 (15 and 7 patients, respectively) completed the study. One outpatient who responded to allopurinol dropped out at week 9 (week 3 of placebo treatment) due to symptom worsening and was included in the analysis. Eighteen patients completed the P50 evoked potential evaluation. Three patients dropped out because of adverse events: seizures in a patient at the fourth week of placebo, pneumonia in a patient at the fourth week of allopurinol treatment, and skin rash in a patient at the second week of allopurinol treatment. Among those patients who started on placebo treatment, 5 dropped out due to lack of efficacy. During the allopurinol treatment phase, 1 patient used cannabis, 1 discontinued antipsychotic treatment, and 2 dropped out due to lack of efficacy.

Among the 23 patients included in the analysis, 1 patient was receiving a depot antipsychotic, 10 were taking atypical antipsychotics (risperidone or olanzapine), and 12 were receiving typical antipsychotics. Seven patients were taking only antipsychotics with or without concurrent anticholinergic medication, whereas 5 were also be-

Table 2. Changes in PANSS Total, Positive, Negative, and General Symptom Scores After Treatment With Allopurinol or Placebo (mean ± SD)

| Group | Total | Positive | Negative | General |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Allopurinol (N = 23) | | | | |
| Change | -12.0 ± 10.0 ^{a,b} | -5.0 ± 4.5 ^{a,b} | -2.0 ± 2.6 ^{a,b} | -5.0 ± 4.9 ^{a,b} |
| % Change | -15 ± 12 ^a | -21 ± 17 ^a | -8 ± 13 ^a | -13 ± 13 ^a |
| Placebo (N = 23) | | | | |
| Change | 3.6 ± 11.3 | 0.8 ± 5.1 | 1.2 ± 2.6 | 1.6 ± 4.8 |
| % Change | 7 ± 20 | 11 ± 42 | 7 ± 16 | 7 ± 17 |
| Allopurinol first (N = 12) | | | | |
| Change | -14.7 ± 10.7 | -6.2 ± 5.1 | -1.8 ± 2.9 | -6.7 ± 4.8 |
| % Change | -18 ± 14 ^b | -26 ± 19 ^b | -9 ± 16 | -18 ± 13 ^b |
| Allopurinol second (N = 11) | | | | |
| Change | -9.1 ± 8.8 | -3.7 ± 3.5 | -2.1 ± 2.3 | -3.3 ± 4.6 |
| % Change | -10 ± 10 ^b | -16 ± 14 ^b | -7 ± 9 ^b | -8 ± 11 |
| Placebo first (N = 11) | | | | |
| Change | 2.8 ± 7.1 | 0.5 ± 2.7 | 1.5 ± 2.8 | 0.8 ± 2.9 |
| % Change | 5 ± 11 | 4 ± 15 | 9 ± 17 | 3 ± 22 |
| Placebo second (N = 12) | | | | |
| Change | 4.3 ± 14.4 | 1.2 ± 6.8 | 0.8 ± 2.5 | 2.3 ± 6.2 |
| % Change | 9 ± 26 | 16 ± 56 | 5 ± 9 | 10 ± 11 |

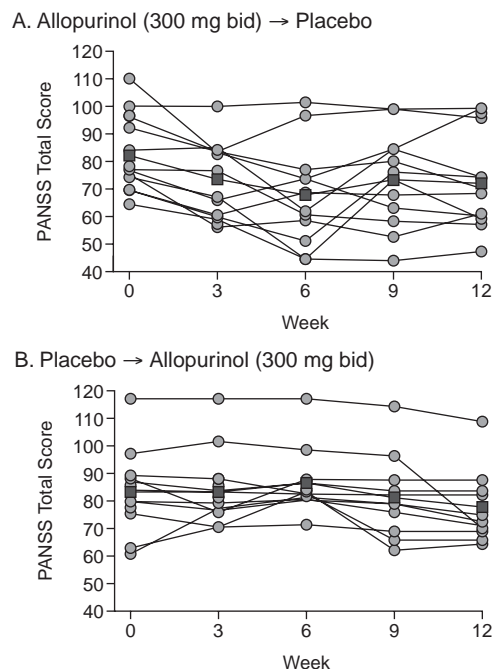
^aDifferent from mean placebo response (p < .01, paired t test).^bDifferent from placebo phase within the same subjects (p < .05, paired t test).

Abbreviation: PANSS = Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale.

ing treated with benzodiazepines, 4 with antidepressants, and 9 with mood stabilizers. Table 1 shows baseline demographic and clinical characteristics of the sample that completed the study. The group starting on allopurinol treatment had a statistically nonsignificant lower age, shorter duration of illness by around 6 years, and lower negative and higher positive symptom scores.

Regarding symptoms, allopurinol treatment was associated with significant clinical improvement as shown in Table 2 for the different symptom domains and treatment orders. Response was particularly evident for positive symptoms. Figures 1 and 2 show PANSS total and positive symptoms, respectively, of all patients. Numbers of treatment responders (PANSS score reduction > 20%) after 6 weeks of treatment with allopurinol and placebo, respectively, were 9/0 for PANSS total score, 11/2 for positive symptoms, 4/0 for negative symptoms, and 8/0 for general symptoms subscale scores. Repeated-measures MANOVA performed with within-subject factors of treatment phase (placebo/allopurinol) and week of treatment (0, 3, and 6 weeks) revealed highly significant treatment effects after allopurinol treatment for total (F = 18.9, df = 2,44; p < .001), positive (F = 17.6, df = 2,44; p < .001), negative (F = 8.4, df = 2,44; p < .001), and general (F = 14.8, df = 2,44; p < .001) symptoms PANSS scores, but not after placebo treatment (F < 2.5, df = 2,44; p > .1 for all symptom scores). Numbers of responders to al-

Figure 1. PANSS Total Scores in Patients Who Received (A) Allopurinol Followed by Placebo (N = 12) or (B) Placebo Followed by Allopurinol (N = 11), With Crossover at Week 6^a



^aSquares show mean scores.

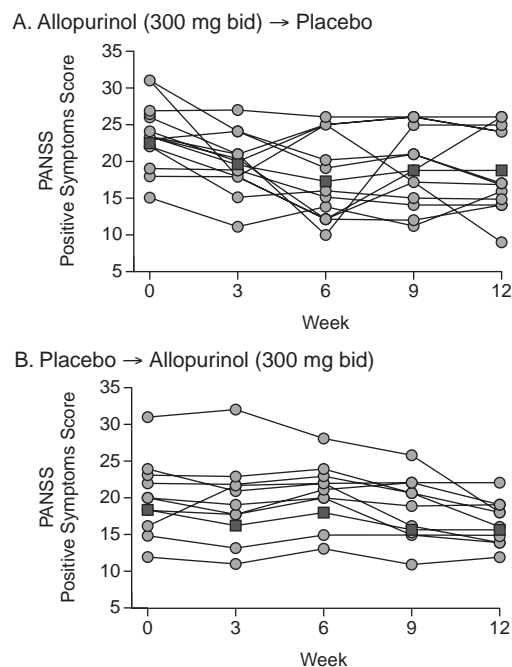
Abbreviation: PANSS = Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale.

lopurinol in the group starting on allopurinol treatment compared with those starting on placebo treatment were 7/2 for total, 7/4 for positive, 3/1 for negative, and 6/2 for general symptoms scores (see also Table 2), without reaching statistical significance.

Secondary analysis showed significant symptom change after 6 weeks of allopurinol compared with placebo treatment for all symptom scores in terms of both absolute and relative symptom scores ($p < .01$, t test for all scores) (Table 2). Moreover, if calculation of the percent reduction in PANSS scores takes into account the fact that items on this scale are scored 1 for absence of symptoms, total and positive symptoms improved 23% and 31% during allopurinol and worsened 18% and 24% during placebo treatment, respectively. The LOCF analysis of the first phase of treatment including all patients enrolled showed a decrease of 11.0 ± 10.3 in total PANSS score (-14%) with allopurinol compared with an increase of 0.2 ± 8.3 (0.2%) with placebo ($p < .001$; both groups had mean baseline PANSS scores of 86).

Comparison of baseline characteristics of responders and nonresponders showed that responders tended to be younger (33 ± 11 and 42 ± 10 years, $p = .056$) and had a shorter duration of illness (15 ± 10 and 25 ± 9 years, $p = .03$). Among institutionalized patients, who were

Figure 2. PANSS Positive Symptom Scores in Patients Who Received (A) Allopurinol Followed by Placebo (N = 12) or (B) Placebo Followed by Allopurinol (N = 11), With Crossover at Week 6^a



^aSquares show mean scores.

Abbreviation: PANSS = Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale.

older and had a longer duration of the disorder, only 1 responded to allopurinol therapy. Clear worsening of symptoms was not observed in any patient during the allopurinol phase. Three patients experienced relapse of symptoms, whereas other responders seemed to remain less symptomatic after switching from allopurinol to placebo. Six of the 9 responders were taking adjuvant medication besides anticholinergics, and 4 responders were receiving atypical antipsychotics.

Regarding adverse events, extrapyramidal symptoms were not altered throughout the study (data not shown), and only 1 patient experienced diarrhea in the first week of treatment with allopurinol. As expected, uric acid levels decreased for all patients during allopurinol treatment compared with baseline and placebo levels (baseline 4.5 ± 1.7 mg/dL, placebo 4.9 ± 1.6 mg/dL, allopurinol 2.2 ± 0.9 mg/dL, $p < .001$), suggesting compliance with treatment. However, baseline uric acid levels and decline of uricemia after allopurinol treatment were not correlated to clinical response.

The P50 ratio was $79.8 \pm 36.7\%$ at baseline, $61.9 \pm 27.0\%$ after allopurinol treatment, and $64.7 \pm 48.4\%$ after placebo treatment, without statistical significance ($p = .08$, Friedman test). Moreover, clinical response was not correlated with P50 ratio decline.

DISCUSSION

The present clinical trial suggests that add-on allopurinol can be effective for treating schizophrenic patients with poor response to antipsychotics. Response was more evident for refractory positive symptoms and in younger patients with a shorter course of the disorder. These results corroborate our previous open observation¹¹ in treatment-resistant schizophrenia. Moreover, allopurinol was well tolerated, with only 1 patient excluded due to the adverse event of skin rash, which can occur in around 3% of patients.²⁰ Apart from this, other side effects with allopurinol are rare and include leukocytosis, eosinophilia, and elevation of aminotransferase activity, which may require discontinuation of treatment.²⁰

Compared with earlier trials, our study used less stringent inclusion criteria for refractory schizophrenia, similarly to other recent studies.^{21,22} Although many patients had a history of treatment with more than 2 antipsychotics of different classes at high doses, the 400-mg minimum dose of chlorpromazine equivalents was established as the lower limit. This dose was used because in clinical practice there has been a trend for use of lower doses of typical antipsychotics since higher doses usually increase adverse events (e.g., extrapyramidal symptoms) rather than clinical response,²³ which is in agreement with D₂ receptor occupancy data.²⁴ Nevertheless, our sample had a clinically significant level of positive symptom psychopathology despite the mean dose of 550 chlorpromazine equivalents, which implies that these patients were not undertreated with antipsychotics at baseline.

Another difference from other trials of this type was that in this trial other adjuvant medications were allowed, such as benzodiazepines, mood stabilizers, and antidepressants; this facilitated inclusion of the treatment-refractory subtype of patients, who are frequently treated with such medications due to their poor response to antipsychotics, despite questionable results. As a result, our sample is relatively heterogeneous, which may be more representative of the clinical setting at the expense of reducing internal validity.

Treatment response was observed regardless of ongoing treatment concerning type of antipsychotic or use of other adjuvant medications. Pharmacokinetic interactions with allopurinol leading to higher plasmatic concentrations of antipsychotics have not been described and, even if present, would be unlikely to account for the therapeutic responses observed after addition of allopurinol, since higher doses of antipsychotics are unlikely to produce further improvement.²³ Moreover, many of these patients had been receiving higher doses of antipsychotics before without clear benefit, and extrapyramidal symptoms were not altered by treatment with allopurinol. In addition, the 600-mg dose of allopurinol is above the usual dose of 300 mg/day for treatment of gout but re-

mained well tolerated. In our previous open-label studies with schizophrenia¹¹ and dementia,¹⁰ we have observed some patients who responded better to this higher dose, which might reflect the somewhat lower distribution of allopurinol in brain tissue.²⁰

There are advantages and inconveniences inherent to the crossover design used in this study. This strategy is suitable to study chronic conditions, and analysis is performed "within" rather than "between" subjects; therefore, the sample size needed is smaller and evaluation is more homogenous. It can be argued that the crossover design and the maintenance of the medication regimen during the trial minimize biases related to the presence of concomitant medication. The limitations of this design involve the dropout rate, a period effect, and a carryover effect. In this study, the dropout of 12 of 35 patients receiving both treatments is reasonable, and there was a trend toward lower response in the second period of treatment. A carryover of treatment effect seemed to occur in certain patients who responded to allopurinol as the first treatment. Additionally, this effect seemed to last more than 6 weeks, so an interval between treatments of 1 or 2 weeks probably would not have fully prevented this effect. Finally, the lack of a washout period between phases permits that worsening of symptoms due to withdrawal of the first treatment could have been detected and included in the analysis. This seemed to be the case for at least 3 patients who started on allopurinol treatment and in none who started on placebo treatment, therefore leading to a mean increase in PANSS scores during the placebo phase.

To our knowledge, the first report of treatment of psychiatric symptoms with allopurinol was in neurologic patients with refractory aggressive behavior.⁹ The rationale was that Lesch-Nyhan syndrome is an inborn neurologic disorder of purine salvage deficit leading to increased purine degradation, which is associated with severe aggressive behavior and mental retardation. Since allopurinol inhibits the enzyme xanthine oxidase, the last step in purine degradation to uric acid, salvage of purines would be enhanced and produce an antiaggressive effect. In the case of schizophrenia, an activity deficit of the purine nucleoside adenosine has been proposed to contribute to the pathophysiology of schizophrenia,^{12,13} and enhancement of adenosine activity has been suggested as a target for therapeutic intervention.²⁵ Adenosine is a neuromodulator of the purinergic system with mainly inhibitory actions in the central nervous system²⁶ through widespread A1 receptors and mesolimbic-striatal A2A receptors, which are co-localized with D₂ receptors.²⁵ Preclinically, adenosine analogs exert antipsychotic,²⁵ anxiolytic, sedative, anticonvulsant,²⁶ and anti-aggressive effects.²⁷ Adenosine A1 and A2A receptor agonists have a clear preclinical antipsychotic profile in dopaminergic and glutamatergic models,^{25,28-30} and recently a cross-tolerance between the adenosine receptor antagonist caf-

feine and an NMDA receptor antagonist was reported in mice.³¹ Of note, activation of A1 receptors strongly inhibits glutamate release,²⁶ a key step underlying the effects of NMDA antagonists,³² and activation of NMDA receptors induced adenosine release in the hippocampus,³³ probably from inhibitory interneurons, and in the striatum.³⁴ Moreover, slow-wave sleep alterations observed in schizophrenia³⁵ are qualitatively similar to those induced by the adenosine antagonist caffeine in healthy subjects,³⁶ and theophylline, another adenosine receptor antagonist, induces P50 evoked potential deficit in normal volunteers that closely resembles the sensory gating alterations of schizophrenia.¹⁹ Unfortunately, safe and tolerable direct adenosine agonists are not yet available for clinical use in humans. Recently, the combination of haloperidol with the inhibitor of adenosine transporter dipyridamole was superior to the combination with placebo in schizophrenic patients.³⁷ In this context, allopurinol is hypothesized to increase availability of purines by inhibiting the enzyme xanthine oxidase, which converts hypoxanthine and xanthine into uric acid. The accumulation of hypoxanthine and xanthine may favor the enzyme hypoxanthine-guanine phosphoribosyltransferase (HGPRT), which is responsible for purine salvage,³⁸ possibly increasing the levels of the neuromodulator adenosine.^{7,9,39} However, according to this model, we would expect an effect of allopurinol on the P50 auditory sensory gating.

Several lines of evidence also suggest a neuroprotective effect of allopurinol.⁴⁰ In animal models of hypoxic-ischemic brain injury, allopurinol attenuated brain cell membrane injury,⁴¹ reduced the extent of cerebral edema,^{42,43} preserved levels of compounds involved in energetic metabolism such as adenosine triphosphate,⁴⁴ decreased the accumulation of arachidonic acid,⁴⁵ and improved the recovery of somatosensory evoked potentials during reperfusion.⁴⁶ These effects are at least partially attributed to the antioxidant activity of allopurinol, since the reaction catalyzed by xanthine oxidase generates reactive oxygen species.⁴⁰ Moreover, allopurinol significantly attenuated hypoxia-induced alterations of glutamatergic NMDA receptors (down-regulation and increased channel affinity), which is particularly important considering that excessive stimulation of the NMDA receptors leads to neuronal injury and degeneration.⁴⁷ Finally, chronic inhibition of xanthine oxidase is unlikely to be problematic, as the genetic disorder of inactive xanthine oxidase activity, xanthinuria, is asymptomatic.³⁹

In summary, this clinical trial indicates allopurinol as an effective adjunctive treatment strategy for poorly responsive schizophrenia, with advantages in cost, tolerability, availability, and potentially neuroprotective action. Given the paucity of the existing alternatives to treat refractory schizophrenia, the positive results of this new pharmacologic approach, and the limitations in sample

size and design, independent replication in larger series of patients is warranted.

Drug names: allopurinol (Lopurin, Zyloprim, and others), carbamazepine (Carbatrol, Tegretol, and others), chlorpromazine (Thorazine, Sonazine, and others), clozapine (Clozaril, Fazaclo, and others), haloperidol (Haldol and others), lithium (Lithobid, Eskalith, and others), olanzapine (Zyprexa), risperidone (Risperdal).

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