**Antiarrhythmics and Anticonvulsants Reduce Sharp Pain**

At Newport Pain Management, we may prescribe different medications in the course of your treatment to minimize sharp pain. Sharp pain is typically due to nerve damage. Nerve damage can occur with surgery, trauma, and poisons in the body such as alcohol, high blood sugar, and chemotherapy drugs. Among the pain medications used to treat nerve pain are lidocaine, mexiletine (Mexitil), pregabalin (Lyrica), and gabapentin (Neurontin, Gralise).

WHAT ARE LIDOCAINE AND MEXILETINE?

Lidocaine has two actions: it is a local anesthetic and an antiarrhythmic. Local anesthetic drugs dull pain in an area into which they are placed. Antiarrhythmics are drugs that change an irregular heartbeat to a normal rhythm. The way they do this is by preventing or slowing abnormal electrical impulses in the heart that cause it to beat Irregularly. Similarly, they reduce other abnormal electrical impulses along the nerves, including those that can cause your pain. It is used in pain management as a patch over painful areas, or as a cream.

Like lidocaine, mexiletine is an antiarrhythmic with local anesthetic effects. It is given as a pill. It will produce pain relief in many persons with "nerve pain." This includes pain described as hot, burning, shooting, "electrical," lancinating, or shocking. Mexiletine may also reduce other types of pain sensations.

WHAT ARE GABAPENTIN, PREGABALIN AND TOPIRAMATE?

Gabapentin (Neurontin, Gralise), pregabalin (Lyrica) and topiramate (Topamax) are some of the more common medications classified as anticonvulsants. They are also known as "membrane stabilizers." As a group, they act to decrease abnormal nerve impulses in the nervous system, such as those that cause seizures and those that can cause pain. These medications can be effective for many types of pain conditions. Topiramate is best for headache prevention, and can be associated with weight loss. Pregabalin and gabapentin are thought to work on the same location in the body, and thus have similar effects. Pregabalin has FDA approval to be used for diabetic neuropathy, fibromyalgia, pain due to spinal damage, and chronic pain after shingles. Gabapentin works almost identically to pregabalin, but each may have different side effects. Gralise is one of several long acting forms of gabapentin. These long acting forms may have lower risk of side effects. All these medications need to be started at low dose, and gradually increased in dose. Thus initially, they may cause sleepiness, balance problems, constipation, and memory changes, while not being very effective for pain. However, your body gets over these side effects with time, and as the dose builds up, your pain improves.

WHAT DO I NEED TO REMEMBER WHILE TAKING THESE MEDICINES?

• Visit your physician regularly. Blood tests will be required at specific intervals to check for changes in your blood cell counts, electrolyte balance and liver tests.

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• DO NOT give this pain medicine to other people, as it was given to you for your pain problem only.

• DO NOT take other medicines from your friends or family. Although they may be trying to help you with your pain, other medicines can interfere with these medicines or cause harmful effects with your pain medications.

• Use the medication ONLY as directed by your pain physician. It may not work properly unless you follow your doctor's instructions.

• Before you start any new medicine(s), tell your physician or pharmacist you are taking pain medications. If you develop a new medical problem while on any of these medicines, you must inform your doctors and your pharmacist.

• Store your medicine away from direct heat or light. Do not keep it in the kitchen or bathroom cabinet, as heat and moisture can destroy many medicines. Keep this and all medicines out of the reach of children.

• If you have any questions or concerns about using a medicine, call your health care professional. Do not stop taking your medicine without first contacting your health care professional. Throw away all outdated medicines or medicines that you are no longer using.

**It helps to see a knowledgeable pain specialist to know when these medications are indicated. See Dr. Scott at Newport Pain Management, 949 759-8400.**  For more information, go to <http://newportpain.com>