Prazosin:  
A Review of its Pharmacological Properties and Therapeutic Efficacy in Hypertension

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Summary

Prazosin\(^1\) is a peripheral vasodilator antihypertensive agent derived from quinazoline. Animal studies suggest that its hypotensive effect results from relaxation of peripheral arterioles as a consequence of blockade of post-synaptic \(\alpha\)-adrenoceptors. In man, the most important haemodynamic effect is a reduction in total peripheral resistance, but in contrast to hydralazine, tachycardia is seldom produced.

Therapeutic trials have shown prazosin to be effective in lowering blood pressure in all grades of hypertension: in mild and some cases of moderate hypertension when used alone and in moderate and severe hypertension when used in combination with other agents. The antihypertensive effect of prazosin is enhanced by the concomitant administration of a thiazide diuretic or a \(\beta\)-adrenoceptor blocking drug. Clinical experience with combination antihypertensive therapy in severe hypertension indicates that a combination of prazosin, a \(\beta\)-adrenoceptor blocking drug and a thiazide diuretic is effective in many such patients. In patients with mild or moderate hypertension, the reduction in blood pressure induced by prazosin is comparable with that of \(\alpha\)-methyldopa when the dose of both drugs is adjusted to obtain optimum effect and the overall incidence of side-effects and their severity has been similar with both drugs under the conditions of controlled therapeutic trials, although the nature of the side-effects differs (drowsiness or tiredness being more common and dizziness more persistent with methyldopa).

The most important side-effect is marked postural hypotension after the initial dose and sometimes after a rapid dose increment. This effect can be minimised by beginning treatment with a low dose (0.5mg tablets 2 or 3 times daily; 1mg capsules 3 times daily) and increasing dosage gradually. Overall, syncope has occurred in fewer than 0.2\% of patients given low initial doses. Postural hypotension is not usually a problem during continued treatment.

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1 'Minipress', 'Hypovase', 'Hypovasol', 'Peripress' (Pfizer).