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FATAL APLASTIC ANEMIA

AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY OF ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE DRUG CHLORAMPHENICOL

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The purpose of this study was: (1) to determine the frequency of exposure to chloramphenicol, and also of exposure to other drugs and agents, in persons who died from aplastic anemia in the period January 1957 through June 1961 in California; (2) to determine the manner in which chloramphenicol was used both before and after the onset of aplastic anemia; and (3) to estimate the risk of fatal aplastic anemia in California among persons receiving chloramphenicol.

CAUSATIVE FACTORS IN APLASTIC ANEMIA

A number of specific agents have long been known to cause aplastic anemia. Prominent among them are benzene from occupational exposure and gold and organic arsenical compounds used in medical treatment. Although exposure to benzene, gold and arsenical compounds has decreased, aplastic anemia has continued to occur. Consequently attention has focused on the role of other potentially toxic agents. These include ionizing radiation, non-medicinal chemicals, and drugs used in the practice of medicine.

The antibiotic chloramphenicol is the drug most commonly suspected in recent years of an etiological role in aplastic anemia. Incrimination of the drug as a toxic bone marrow depressant has been well documented since chloramphenicol

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