



INTRODUCTION

Understanding the calcium antagonists

CALCIUM ANTAGONISTS have enjoyed progressive growth in clinical use as effective agents in the management of selected cardiac arrhythmias and for the treatment of angina pectoris. Approval for the treatment of arterial hypertension has generated a tremendous increase in interest and use of these agents for patients with all degrees of arterial hypertension. Not only are they effective, but patients find them acceptable, and compliance is good when these agents are used in the treatment of hypertension.

In the following article, Dr. David J. Triggle provides a comprehensive, understandable review of the clinical pharmacology of currently available calcium antagonists, together with clinical profiles of the different subclasses of calcium antagonists. The reader will appreciate and understand their important role in the modern management of the hypertensive patient. In

addition, Dr. Triggle has catalogued many of the additional recognized and potential uses of calcium antagonists in clinical medicine. It is important that the reader recognize the broad range of clinical conditions in which calcium antagonists have demonstrated potential beneficial effects. Possibly the most significant of all of the observed effects is the calcium-channel dependency of progressive atherosclerosis. Dr. Triggle has briefly reviewed the "atherogenic cascade" to help us understand the role of calcium and calcium antagonists in the process of atherogenesis. He has also noted the potential benefits of vasoselective calcium antagonists on the heart, brain, and kidney.

DONALD G. VIDT, MD
Section Editor
Senior Physician, Department of Hypertension and Nephrology
The Cleveland Clinic Foundation