

7: Letters

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Dear Nate,

I have read the file on Dr. Vasant G. Joshi with some interest. As I understand his observations, it is that INH plus Vitamin B6 served to relieve a single case of catatonia. The patient had two EEG records done, before and while receiving INH. There was a remarkable change in the EEG, characterized by the appearance of generalized, dominant slow theta activity which became more intense with hyperventilation. Dr. Joshi notes that he has used the combination in other schizophrenic patients with success.

I am not surprised by his report. It is consistent with two sets of data. The response of catatonic patients is notoriously rapid when any change is induced in the CNS. Thus, barbiturates, amphetamines, and ECT have each been successfully used in catatonia. The most interesting is the latter. A recent report by Breakey and Kala (British Medical Journal 2: 357-359, 1977) finds that ECT was remarkably successful in relieving more than a dozen cases of catatonia after typhoid fever. The predominant finding in ECT in the EEG is the development of high voltage slow waves in the theta range which are responsive to hyperventilation.

The other observation is that of the association of EEG and behavior after psychoactive drugs. It is clear that any compound that alters brain function will show its effects in the EEG, and when such effects are observed by clinicians, the EEG patterns will be clear and will follow predictable patterns. Dr. Joshi's paper suggests that the high doses of INH which he is using do have an effect on the EEG similar to ECT or antidepressant drugs.

It is not possible for us to corroborate Dr. Joshi's findings. We could cooperate with other clinicians who wish to duplicate his observations by carrying out the EEG analyses on records collected in another site, if the records are collected on tape compatible with our recorders. We also lack the funds for a research fellowship at this time, although it is possible that you and the other Research Directors may be making funds for fellowships available.

Thank you for the opportunity to read this interesting communications and I congratulate Dr. Joshi on his fine observations.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry