

Conner's scale places little emphasis on irritability and sleeplessness, symptoms that were prominent in the reactors in the University of Melbourne study. The number of reactors to tartrazine identified in this study contrasts markedly with those of previous studies, and may have been related to the method used for selection of subjects. In Australia, the Feingold hypothesis is still alive.

### **ATTENTION PROBLEMS IN EPILEPSY**

The relation of laterality of the epileptogenic focus to cognition and attention in 43 unmedicated children, mean age 10 years, with benign rolandic epilepsy of childhood was assessed at Clinica Neurologica Universita, Perugia, Italy. Children with right sided or bilateral paroxysmal foci scored worse on a figure cancellation task, whereas those with left-sided foci performed as well as controls. The task measures attentive processes and visuospatial orientation. (Piccirilli M et al. Attention problems in epilepsy: possible significance of the epileptogenic focus. Epilepsia Sept/Oct 1994;35:1091-1096). (Reprints: Dr M Piccirilli, Clinica Neurologica Universita, Via E Dal Pozzo, 06100 Perugia, Italy).

COMMENT. Attentional difficulties in children with benign rolandic epilepsy are related to right hemisphere dysfunction and impaired visuospatial processing. The data did not support an hypothesis of left spatial neglect. The laterality of the epileptic focus is linked to the type of cognitive deficit. Left hemisphere dysfunction affects language-related abilities. Attentional disorders in epileptic children can be explained by paroxysmal activity, and is independent of any effect of antiepileptic drugs.

### **SEIZURE DISORDERS**

#### **PSYCHOSES AND EPILEPSY: PARADOXICAL NORMALIZATION**

Five children aged 2.5 to 9 years who developed paradoxical, or forced normalization (acute psychiatric symptoms with abrupt cessation of seizures and normalized EEG) are reported from the Shaare Zedek Medical Center, Jerusalem. Three had Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, and 2 had simple motor and complex partial seizures. They had been treated with ACTH, valproic acid, carbamazepine, or vigabatrin. One patient at age 9 years was having multiple daily seizures despite phenobarbital, phenytoin, and carbamazepine. Within 7 days of initiating a second trial of ACTH gel (80 U/day) for Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, seizures ceased and EEG epileptic activity disappeared. Concomitantly, his behavior changed; he became disoriented, aggressive, hyperactive, dyspraxic, and dysphasic. ACTH was discontinued, he remained seizure-free, but his behavior necessitated psychiatric hospitalization. He gradually improved over 5 years, but as an adult he is retarded (IQ 55). He has no seizures, no antiepileptic therapy, and his EEG is normal. The behavioral manifestations in this patient were classified as organic mental syndrome; in the remaining patients they were a schizophrenia-like psychosis in 1, and autistic withdrawal in 3. (Amir N, Gross-Tsur V. Paradoxical normalization in childhood epilepsy. Epilepsia Sept/Oct 1994;35:1060-1064). (Reprints: Dr N Amir, Neuropediatric Unit, Shaare Zedek Medical Center, Jerusalem, Israel 91031).

COMMENT. Psychiatric complications have been reported in adolescents and adults with absence epilepsy. Paroxysmal normalization (PN) was