

hearing disorders are a significant complication of fetal alcohol exposure, probably contributing to the speech and language and learning disabilities commonly associated with the syndrome. (Church MW, Gerkin KP. Hearing disorders in children with fetal alcohol syndrome: findings from case reports. Pediatrics August 1988;82:147-154).

COMMENT. As a cause of mental retardation, fetal alcohol syndrome is as prevalent as Down's syndrome and occurs in at least one in 1000 births. Postmortem examination of the brain reveals extensive developmental defects, mostly the consequence of migration anomalies. Heterotopias, lissencephaly, and agenesis of the corpus callosum have been described. Migration anomalies may involve the brain stem as well as the cerebrum, thus accounting for the sensorineural deafness noted in the above study.

#### VALPROATE TOXICITY

Gastritis and erosion of the gastric mucosa is reported in 10 children who presented with feeding difficulties after long-term treatment with divalproex sodium (Depakote) and valproic acid (Depakene) at the Departments of Neurology, Pediatrics, and Pediatric Surgery, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City. Anorexia and refusal to eat were complicated by vomiting in 8 patients, abdominal pain in 5, weight loss in 3, and diarrhea in 2. Endoscopy confirmed erosive gastritis. Treatment with oral antacids (Maalox) and cimetidine resulted in clinical improvement. (Marks WA et al. Gastritis with valproate therapy. Arch Neurol August 1988; 45:903-905).

COMMENT. Gastrointestinal disturbances are common at the initiation of valproate therapy but have not previously been reported following its long term use. The diagnosis of gastritis in mentally retarded patients with epilepsy may be difficult, and delay may lead to gastric erosion, resulting in malnutrition, weight loss, and dehydration. If liver and pancreas disease has been excluded as a side-effect, the treatment of valproate-induced gastritis includes antacids and an alteration of anticonvulsant regimen in some cases.

#### NEONATAL SEIZURES

##### INFANTILE SPASMS, HYPSSARRHYTHMIA, AND ADRENOLEUKODYSTROPHY (ALD)

An 8 1/2 month-old girl with seizures beginning at 5 days, hypsarrhythmia in the EEG, severe retardation, and a clinical diagnosis of infantile spasms was discovered to have biochemical and pathological features of adrenoleukodystrophy, as reported from the John F. Kennedy Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland. Laboratory studies showed elevated plasma levels of very long chain fatty acids, and postmortem examination at 14 months revealed cerebral destructive lesions and adrenal cortex atrophy. Seizure frequency had diminished initially with prednisone