



Bulletin

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NEW HOPE FOR HEROIN ADDICTS

As a result of financial assistance provided by the National Research Council of Canada to a Cadiac, Quebec, firm, heroin addicts may find the path back to normal life much smoother. The company, Bristol Laboratories of Canada, has produced a chemical, never before synthesized. Experiments with animals have shown that the chemical - a new narcotic antagonist - combats and counteracts the effects of heroin.

THE NEW ANTAGONIST

Bristol's new antagonist is called Levo BC-2605 (the 2605th compound synthesized at Bristol Laboratories). It is a potent, long-acting antagonist with very quick response. Laboratory investigations have demonstrated that very low doses of BC-2605 eliminated the effect of morphine completely - and they did so in less than 90 seconds. Five milligrams of morphine can be blocked by two-tenths of a milligram of this antagonist. One-half a milligram is effective for 24 hours.

Chemists and biochemists are still trying to determine how antagonists work.

"In our case," explains Dr. Yvon Perron, head of research at Bristol, "the antagonist may occupy the same receptor sites in the cell as the opiate - displacing the latter if it has to - and then blocks off these sites from the opiate. It does this quickly in a matter of one or two minutes. An important point to remember is that the cell membrane function appears to be returned to normal by the antagonist."

NO ADVERSE EFFECTS

In addition to being short-lived and weak, several of the early antagonists (the first was synthesized in 1914) had undesirable side-effects. Nalorphine (1940) counteracted most of the actions of narcotics in a satisfactory manner but it produced unpleasant feelings of disorientation and hallucinations. The result was that use of nalorphine was restricted to treatment of narcotic overdosage. More recent antagonists were even more potent than nalorphine but their side-effects were also more intense.

No such problem exists with BC-2605. Numerous

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