Question:

My son, a head-injured patient, recently suffered two seizures and was readmitted to the university emergency room. He was given (via infusion) 1300 cc of Dilantin in about 30 minutes so he would not have a seizure while getting a CT scan. Prior to that, he had been a dose (amount unknown) of a drug to stop the seizure he was having. After about two hours, his body became very flushed—bright red—and it was decided he was reacting to the Dilantin and Tegretol was suggested as an antiseizure drug. What reactions can we expect from Tegretol and what other antiseizure drugs are available? He is also currently taking Prozac and Ritalin to assist in awareness states.

Answer:

The more common side effects associated with Tegretol include clumsiness, dizziness (mild), drowsiness, lightheadedness, nausea or vomiting (mild), and blurred vision. These side effects may go away during treatment as his body adjusts to the medicine. However, you should check with his doctor if any of the above side effects continue or are bothersome. Other side effects not listed above may occur in some people. Tegretol can cause a rash in some people. Also, a person may become more sensitive to the sun while taking Tegretol. It is important to avoid unprotected exposure to the sun for this reason. If your son complains of any other side effects, check with his physician. Many other drugs are used to treat seizure disorders. The drugs of choice will depend on which type of seizure is being treated. For example, the drugs of choice for the Grand Mal type of seizure are Valproate, Carbamazepine, or Phenytoin. Alternative drugs to treat Grand Mal seizures include Lamotrigine, Primidone, or Phenobarbital. Other types of seizures may respond better to other antiseizure medications.