This important group of movement disorders is primarily associated with drugs that block dopamine receptors (neuroleptics) or central dopaminergic transmission. These drugs are widely used in psychiatry, but it is important to appreciate that drugs used in the treatment of nausea or vomiting (e.g., prochlorperazine [Compazine]) or gastroesophageal disorders (e.g., metoclopramide) are neuroleptic agents. Hyperkinetic movement disorders secondary to neuroleptic drugs can be divided into those that present acutely, subacutely, or after prolonged exposure (tardive syndromes). Dopamine-blocking drugs can also be associated with a reversible parkinsonian syndrome for which anticholinergics are often concomitantly prescribed, but there is concern that this may increase the risk of developing a tardive syndrome.

ACUTE

Dystonia is the most common acute hyperkinetic drug reaction. It is typically generalized in children and focal in adults (e.g., blepharospasm, torticollis, or oromandibular dystonia). The reaction can develop within minutes of exposure and can be successfully treated in most cases with parenteral administration of anticholinergics (benztropine or diphenhydramine), benzodiazepines (lorazepam, clonazepam, or diazepam), or dopamine agonists. The abrupt onset of severe spasms may occasionally be confused with a seizure; however, there is no loss of consciousness, automatisms, or postictal features typical of epilepsy. The acute onset of chorea, stereotypic behavior, and tics may also be seen, particularly following exposure to CNS stimulants such as methylphenidate, cocaine, or amphetamines.

SUBACUTE

Akathisia is the commonest reaction in this category. It consists of motor restlessness with a need to move that is alleviated by movement. Therapy consists of removing the offending agent. When this is not possible, symptoms may be ameliorated with benzodiazepines, anticholinergics, beta blockers, or dopamine agonists.

TARDIVE SYNDROMES

These disorders develop months to years after initiation of neuroleptic treatment. Tardive dyskinesia (TD) is most common and typically presents with choreiform movements involving the mouth, lips, and tongue. In severe cases, the trunk, limbs, and respiratory muscles may also be affected. In approximately one-third of patients, TD remits within 3 months of stopping the drug, and most patients gradually improve over the course of several years. Abnormal movements may also develop or worsen after stopping the offending agent. The movements are often mild and more upsetting to the family than to the patient, but they can be severe and disabling, particularly in the context of an underlying psychiatric disorder. Atypical antipsychotics (e.g., clozapine, risperidone, olanzapine, quetiapine, ziprasidone, and aripiprazole) are thought to be associated with a lower risk of TD in comparison to traditional antipsychotics, although this remains to be established in controlled studies. Younger patients have a lower risk of developing neuroleptic-induced TD, whereas the elderly, females, and those with underlying organic cerebral dysfunction have been reported to be at greater risk. Chronic use is associated with increased risk, and specifically, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has warned that use of metoclopramide for more than 12 weeks increases the risk of TD. Because TD can be permanent and resistant to treatment, antipsychotics should be used judiciously, atypical neuroleptics should be the preferred agent when possible, and the need for continued use should be regularly monitored.

Treatment primarily consists of stopping the offending agent. If the patient is receiving a traditional antipsychotic and withdrawal is not possible, replacement with an atypical antipsychotic should be tried. Abrupt cessation of a neuroleptic should be avoided because acute withdrawal can induce worsening. TD can persist after withdrawal of antipsychotics and can be difficult to treat. Benefits may occasionally be achieved with valproic acid, anticholinergics, or botulinum toxin injections. In refractory cases, catecholamine depleters such as tetrabenazine may be helpful, but this drug can be associated with dose-dependent sedation and orthostatic hypotension and may induce parkinsonism as a side effect. Other approaches include baclofen (40–80 mg/d), clonazepam (1–8 mg/d), or valproic acid (750–3000 mg/d). In some cases, the abnormal movement is refractory to therapy.

Chronic neuroleptic exposure can also be associated with tardive dystonia, with preferential involvement of axial muscles and characteristic rocking movements of the trunk and pelvis. Tardive dystonia can be more troublesome than tardive dyskinesia and frequently persists despite stopping medication. Valproic acid, anticholinergics, and botulinum toxin may occasionally be beneficial, but patients are frequently refractory to medical therapy. Tardive akathisia, tardive Tourette's, and tardive tremor syndromes are rare but may also occur after chronic neuroleptic exposure.

Neuroleptic medications can also be associated with a neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS). NMS is characterized by the acute or subacute onset of muscle rigidity, elevated temperature, altered mental status, hyperthermia, tachycardia, labile blood pressure, renal failure, and markedly elevated creatine kinase levels. Symptoms typically evolve within days or weeks after initiating the drug. NMS can also be precipitated by the abrupt withdrawal of dopaminergic medications in PD patients. Treatment involves immediate cessation of the offending antipsychotic drug and the introduction of a dopaminergic agent (e.g., a dopamine agonist or levodopa), dantrolene, or a benzodiazepine. Treatment may need to be undertaken in an intensive care setting and include supportive measures such as control of body temperature (antipyretics and cooling blankets), hydration, electrolyte replacement, and control of renal function and blood pressure.

Drugs that have serotonin-like activity (tryptophan, MDMA or "ecstasy," meperidine) or that block serotonin reuptake can induce a rare, but potentially fatal, serotonin syndrome that is characterized by confusion, hyperthermia, tachycardia, and coma as well as rigidity, ataxia, and tremor. Myoclonus is often a prominent feature, in contrast to NMS, which it resembles. Patients can be managed with propranolol, diazepam, diphenhydramine, chlorpromazine, or cyproheptadine as well as supportive measures.

A variety of drugs can also be associated with parkinsonism (see above) and hyperkinetic movement disorders. Some examples include phenytoin (chorea, dystonia, tremor, myoclonus), carbamazepine (tics and dystonia), tricyclic antidepressants (dyskinesias, tremor, myoclonus), fluoxetine (myoclonus, chorea, dystonia), oral contraceptives (dyskinesia), β-adrenergics (tremor), buspirone (akathisia, dyskinesias, myoclonus), and digoxin, cimetidine, diazoxide, lithium, methadone, and fentanyl (dyskinesias).

PAROXYSMAL DYSKINESIAS

Paroxysmal dyskinesias are a group of rare disorders characterized by episodic, brief involuntary movements that can manifest as various types of hyperkinetic movements, including chorea, dystonia, tremor, and myoclonus. There are two main categories: (1) *paroxysmal kinesigenic dyskinesia*, where the involuntary movements are triggered by sudden movement, and (2) *paroxysmal nonkinesigenic dyskinesias*, where the attacks are not induced by movement. There are rare cases of *exercise-induced dyskinesia,* where attacks are induced by prolonged exercise.

Paroxysmal kinesigenic dyskinesia (PKD) is characterized by brief, self-limited attacks induced by movement onset such as running but also occasionally by unexpected sound or photic stimulation. Attacks may affect one side of the body, last seconds to minutes at a time, and recur several times a day. They usually manifest as dystonic posturing of a limb but may also become generalized. PKD is most commonly familial with an autosomal dominant pattern of inheritance but may also occur secondary to various brain disorders such as multiple sclerosis or hyperglycemia. PKD is more frequent in males (4:1), and the onset is typically in the first or second decade of life. About 70% report sensory symptoms such as tingling or numbness of the affected limb preceding the attack by a few milliseconds. The evolution is relatively benign, and there is a trend toward resolution of the attacks over time. The cause is not known, but a mutation in the proline-rich transmembrane protein 2 (*PRRT2*) gene that may be involved in