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Drugs

BETA BLOCKERS—There are two fundamentally different types of adrenergic receptors, each of which can combine in some way, as yet unknown, with chemical mediators to produce a predictable response. Stimulation of these receptors mimics the effects of adrenergic nerve stimulation. Drugs that block the alpha-adrenergic receptors have been available and have been used successfully in clinical situations for many years. More recently, drugs which block the beta-adrenergic receptors have become available. However, the mechanism of action of presently available beta-adrenergic blocking compounds is complex. These drugs are useful clinically, and although the full range of their therapeutic significance has not been defined, they are currently valuable in the management in such conditions as angina pectoris and certain cardiac arrhythmias. Specifically, the drugs have a role in the management of digitalis induced premature ventricular concentrations which can be either totally abolished or markedly reduced by propranolol. The drug has been successfully used in the management of paroxysmal atrial tachycardia, and partial arterial ventricular block. Propranolol has also been shown to be useful in decreasing the ventricular rate associated with rapid atrial fibrillation. (Epstein, S. E., and Braunwald, E.: *Beta-Adrenergic Blocking Drugs*, *New Eng. J. Med.* 275: 1175 (Nov.) 1966.)