Clinical Aspects of Calcium Entry Blockers

Progress in Basic and Clinical Pharmacology

Vol. 2

Series Editors
P. Lomax, Los Angeles, Calif.
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Clinical Aspects of Calcium Entry Blockers

Volume Editor
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14 figures, 1 color plate and 15 tables, 1989

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Progress in Basic and Clinical Pharmacology

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Clinical aspects of calcium entry blockers
(Progress in basic and clinical pharmacology; vol. 2)
Includes bibliographies and index.
Zwieten, P.A. van. II. Series.
[DNLM: 1. Calcium Channel Blockers - pharmacology. 2. Calcium Channel Blockers - therapeutic
use. W1 PR666GK v. 2 / QV 276 C6406]
RM666.C243C55 1988 616.1’061 88-29625
ISBN 3-8055-4858-3

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Printed by Konkordia Druck GmbH, Bühl/Baden (FRG)
ISBN 3-8055-4858-3

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Preface
Calcium antagonists (CAs) have drawn the attention as drugs that are both therapeutically relevant and of great fundamental importance. Their discovery has greatly deepened our insight into the fundamental processes of cellular calcium metabolism, and the concept ‘specific calcium channels’ in the cell membrane would probably not have been submitted without the availability of the CAs as selective blockers of these channels. Most review papers and monographs on CAs have emphasized either their fundamental mechanisms or, clinically, the treatment of one particular disease with these therapeutic agents.

Reviews or books covering the broader spectrum of the therapeutic applicability of the CAs are rare. It thus seemed of interest to ask experts in their various fields to present the state of the art of the CA drugs as therapeutic means in the most important clinical conditions where they are applied at present. After two introductory chapters of a more basic character, the role of CAs in various cardiovascular and neurological disorders is described in some detail, with emphasis on the clinical aspects but without neglecting the basic mechanisms involved, as far as relevant. We have limited the discussion in this book to those diseases where the therapeutic role of CAs is substantiated by clinical trials, however modest they may sometimes be. Those diseases where only case reports and clinical impressions are available with respect to the possible therapeutic activity of CAs are not included here, but the reader may consult the recently published volume (No. 552) of the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences on Calcium Antagonism edited by P.M. Vanhoutte, L. Paoletti, and S. Govoni.

I was fortunate in finding such highly competent authors for the various chapters and subjects and I wish them to be assured of my gratitude for their contributions.

P. A. van Zwieten