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Homeopathic treatment of ocular allergies effective, accepted by patients

These clinicians turn to natural therapies as first-line therapy, giving the body a chance to heal itself.

Bob Kronemyer

Homeopathic remedies for treating ocular allergies are safe and effective, according to two clinicians.



Edward C.
Kondrot

"Homeopathic treatment of allergies is the best way to go, because it is not suppressive," Edward C. Kondrot, MD, CCH, in private practice in Phoenix, said in an interview with *Primary Care Optometry News*. "A lot of the steroidal preparations and other pharmaceutical drops really mask the symptoms."

According to Dr. Kondrot, homeopathic medicine is based on the law of similars. "A substance that produces symptoms in a healthy person will treat those same symptoms in a diseased state," he said.

There are many examples of allergy desensitization, such as an allergist injecting a dilute solution of ragweed to a patient who is allergic to ragweed. "This is a homeopathic approach," said Dr. Kondrot. "In homeopathy, we look at the characteristic symptoms of the patient, such as burning and itching. What makes it better and what makes it worse? Sometimes cold weather makes it better, other times cold weather will make it worse. These characteristic symptoms lead us to a specific remedy."

Homeopathy: first-line therapy

Dr. Kondrot nearly always uses homeopathic eye drops, which are preservative free, as first-line options for ocular allergies. "In most cases, if you select the right homeopathic remedy or a combination of remedies, it is not necessary to use more traditional therapies," he said. "Homeopathic remedies are very successful. They improve both symptoms and signs."

The Desensitization Eye Drop Formula for Allergy from Natural Ophthalmics (Dillon, Colo.) contains four active ingredients: *Allium cepa*, *apis*, *Euphrasia* and *sabadilla*. "*Allium cepa* is the onion," Dr. Kondrot said. "So using the law of similars, if you are in the kitchen and chopping an onion, you will get a lot of watering in your eye. *Allium cepa* treats the symptom of watering."

Likewise, an *apis* is the bumblebee, he said. "When you get stung by a bee, you get a lot of burning. *Apis* homeopathically treats the symptom of burning," Dr. Kondrot said. "However, the bee venom is diluted, so there is no physical substance left. We are actually trying to cause a 'deamplification' of the symptoms."

Euphrasia is a European wild plant with medicinal properties to treat redness and irritation of the eye.

"*Sabadilla* also treats redness, burning and watering, along with other characteristic symptoms, such as sneezing and coughing," said Dr. Kondrot, who is a medical advisor to Natural Ophthalmics.

The Natural Ophthalmics eye drop is taken four to five times a day, as needed, and is stopped when patients are feeling better. "This is my first-line treatment," Dr. Kondrot said. "More than 80% of my patients have relief of symptoms and signs. Typically, if the inciting cause is eliminated, homeopathy will cure the condition. This is the big difference between homeopathy and allopathy. There are also minimal or no side effects, primarily because we are dealing with diluted substances. They are not toxic at all."

Dr. Kondrot said patients are receptive to homeopathic remedies for ocular allergies, in part because these products are inexpensive. "People are also searching for more natural alternatives," he said.

Assessing the cause

The underlying cause of the ocular allergy is an important factor in treatment. For instance, any treatment for a strong allergy to smoke "will be difficult as long as that allergen continues to be in the presence of the patient," Dr. Kondrot said. "A homeopathic doctor will assess the causative factors, whether it is airborne allergies, food allergies or toxins in the environment. We try to make an effort to eliminate those, along with dietary changes and increasing the amount of water that a patient drinks."

Environmental allergies, such as ragweed, are probably the most common type of ocular allergies that Dr. Kondrot treats. "I've also been treating a lot of allergies to glaucoma drops. This seems to be a large part of my practice now," said Dr. Kondrot, who earned a doctorate in homeotherapeutics. "I'm helping these patients get off some of their glaucoma drops by using homeopathic preparations and nutritional supplements. I also perform microcurrent stimulation."

Working with the body

"Homeopathics, in general, are less harmful to the body. They work with the body instead of against it," Jeffrey R. Anshel, OD, in private practice in Carlsbad, Calif., told PCON. "Instead of suppressing the immune system, homeopathics actually stimulate it to help the body fight different invaders. Maybe it is because I practice in Southern California, but many of my patients prefer a natural approach or the least invasive anti-drug therapy, so I start with homeopathic eye drops."

"These homeopathic drops work pretty well," he continued. "Both symptoms and signs improve. However, some of the more aggravated or long-standing conditions take longer to resolve. But if you catch something early enough, the homeopathics work very well in general."

Dr. Anshel most commonly treats seasonal airborne allergies (e.g., hay fever). "The homeopathic eye drops are typically applied as needed," he said. "I tell my patients to not hesitate to use the drops three, four or even five times a day. It is not like a medication that can cause an adverse reaction."



Jeffrey R.
Anshel

According to Dr. Anshel, Allergy Eye Relief eye drops from Similasan Corp. (Highlands Ranch, Colo.) is similar to Natural Ophthalmic's eye drop, although it has been on the market longer. Dr. Anshel, who serves on the board of Natural Ophthalmics and has been involved in homeopathic medicine since 1979, said "One difference, though, is that the Natural Ophthalmic eye drop is available only through doctors, whereas the Similasan eye drop is available over the counter."

Boiron USA (Newtown Square, Pa.) also offers a line of homeopathic products, including an eye drop. "But this eye drop is more general and not as specific for allergy," Dr. Anshel said.

Success rate

Dr. Anshel said that between 50% to 75% of his patients can be treated effectively with homeopathic eye drops. His next step is usually the prescription medication Patanol (olopatadine HCl 0.1 %, Alcon). "Nearly everyone has success with either homeopathics or Patanol," Dr. Anshel said.

Dr. Anshel admitted that the research in homeopathics "is not as scientific as most doctors would prefer. In addition, we don't really prescribe most of these products in the traditional sense, we recommend them. I encourage doctors to offer homeopathics as an option to treat ocular allergies. You should treat the patient on his or her level and with what makes the patient feel comfortable – not only physically comfortable, but psychologically and emotionally comfortable, too.

"For mild symptoms, you don't want to overkill," he continued. "Doctors can be somewhat heavy-handed at times. Homeopathics support the body and encourage the body to heal itself."

For more information:

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