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Ocular Allergy – A fresh approach to both Patient and Practice Management

It has been said that a harsh winter generates a booming allergy season the following spring. With that said, considering the past snowy winter, be prepared to see a record number of allergy cases marching into your practice. Even without this type of influx, allergy is a “big problem” and doctors should read “big opportunity,” to help that is.

According to a Pfizer executive: “With an estimated 50 million Americans afflicted by pollen, ragweed and other irritants, antihistamine eye-drop products continue to experience tremendous growth,”

Traditionally we have treated allergies with antihistamines, vasoconstrictors, NSAIDS, steroids and mast cell stabilizers. These treatments work by blocking the inflammation pathway at some point. Practitioners should be aware of another approach – allergy desensitization. With allergy desensitization, there is no masking of symptoms or hindering the inflammation response, which is a primary tool for the immune system to fight bacterial and viral infection. Desensitization is widely used by MD’s specializing in the treatment of various types of allergy, but it had not had a practical application for ocular allergy.

Recently, Natural Ophthalmics Inc. has introduced an eye drop that utilizes the principle of allergy desensitization in a dosage form based on homeopathic medicine. The homeopathic micro-dilution process allows the instillation of ocular allergens in such a low concentration that irritation, adverse reaction and drug interaction does not occur. The drops are immediately soothing so itching, burning and watering are relieved surprisingly fast.

Homeopathic medicines have a long history in allergy treatment. There are several good clinical studies supporting its use (Mark B. Abelson, M.D, 1996), (Wiesenauer, Ludtke, 1996), (Taylor, Reilly, Llewellyn-Jones, et al, 2000), (Belon, Cumps, Ennis, et al.,2004), (Benveniste, 1988), (Riley, 1986).

The word “homeopathy” is derived from two Greek words: homoios which means “similar” and pathos which means “suffering.” Homeopathy refers to the observation that a medicinal substance will elicit a healing response for the specific syndrome of symptoms (or suffering) that it has been proven to cause when given in overdose, to a healthy person.

Both immunizations and allergy treatments are applications in modern medicine that actually stimulate the body’s own defenses in the prevention or treatment of specific diseases. Both of these treatments are derived from homeopathic principles. Homeopathic medicine is so widely practiced by physicians in Europe that it is no longer appropriate to consider it “alternative medicine.” Approximately 30% of French doctors and 20% of German doctors use homeopathic medicines regularly, while over 40% of British physicians refer patients to homeopathic doctors, and almost half of all Dutch physicians consider homeopathic medicines to be effective.

According to Jeffrey R. Anshel, OD, in private practice in Carlsbad, CA. “Homeopathics, in general, are less harmful to the body. They work with the body instead of against it,” “Instead of suppressing the immune system, homeopathics actually stimulate it to help the body fight different invaders. “These homeopathic drops work pretty well,” he continued. “Both symptoms and signs improve. “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.” 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.

The benefit for practice management comes from the fact that the drops are only sold via health care practitioners – not in stores. Return visits, referrals and profits are generated for the practice, all while differentiating you from your competition.