
Introduction

Richard F. Lockey

Standardized allergen extracts are a reality. In fact, so much information is now available on allergen standardization, 2 issues of *Clinical Reviews In Allergy* are devoted to this important subject.

Written by a roster of world-class clinicians and scientists, these monographs will be useful to all physicians who practice allergy and clinical immunology. They also should be of value to allergen extract manufacturing firms and to serve as a stimulus for interested readers to more extensive study of any of the subjects reviewed.

The reasons why standardized allergen extracts are necessary and various immunologic techniques used to standardize them are covered in the first volume. Chapters on tree, grass, and weed allergens also are included. The second monograph covers allergens derived from molds, foods, fur-bearing animals, and insects, as well as state-of-the-art reviews on modified allergens.

The first panel review of allergenic extracts, the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Office of Biologics, met in 1974. All allergenic extracts marketed at that time were reviewed by the panel for safety and efficacy. Only those extracts determined to be safe and effective remain on the market today. The panel also recommended: 1) greater efforts to standardize allergenic extracts; 2) establishment of FDA levels of potency for allergenic extracts; and 3) an examination of possible benefits or deleterious interactions among the various components in combination allergen extracts. These monographs illustrate that tremendous progress has been made to achieve these goals, despite the fact that much additional work is needed. In the end, patients with allergic disease will be best served by providing physicians, trained in allergy and immunology, with diagnostic and therapeutic allergenic extracts of high quality.

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