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Publication bias with cetirizine in atopic dermatitis: Safe but ineffective?

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To the Editor:

In the process of reviewing our formulary treatment options for atopic dermatitis, our reviewers discovered missing data expected from a landmark trial. We hope you will help encourage the publication of these data.

The Early Treatment of the Atopic Child Study Group has completed a large, multicenter, randomized, double-blind, placebocontrolled trial of cetirizine versus placebo in 817 children with atopic dermatitis. The *Journal* has published 3 articles from this study group: one on adverse effects,^{[1](#)} another on asthma prevention (using data from a 12-month study extension with voluntary enrollment),^{[2](#)} and a third on prevention of acute urticaria.^{[3](#)} Results on the effect of cetirizine in treating atopic dermatitis have not yet been published. Preliminary findings, reported to have been presented at a conference, found no difference in efficacy between cetirizine and placebo.^{[4](#)} Authors of the first published study stated that the efficacy of cetirizine in the treatment of atopic dermatitis is described in other publications, which is misleading.^{[1](#)}

Two systematic reviews have postulated that antihistamines are effective in relieving pruritis of atopic dermatitis only to the extent that they cause sedation.^{4 5} Cetirizine reportedly does not cause somnolence in long-term use.¹ Do these findings, together with the absence of published results from the Early Treatment of the Atopic Child Study Group on atopic dermatitis, mean that cetirizine is no more effective than placebo in relieving atopic dermatitis? Will you please encourage study authors to submit the missing study results for publication in the *Journal* ?

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