

UPDATE ON SUBLINGUAL IMMUNOTHERAPY TREATMENT REGIMES

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The clinical documentation on sublingual immunotherapy has recently been extended in a number of publications describing treatment of allergic hay fever and asthma in pollen and house dust mite allergy. Clinical efficacy of sublingual immunotherapy can be linked to consistent changes in immunological mechanisms including reduced inflammation in the respiratory mucosa and significant increases in circulating allergen specific IgG antibodies, as well as a potential effect on allergen specific T cells. The safety of sublingual immunotherapy is high, making daily self-treatment at home appropriate.

Studies in mouse models support the immunological findings in human studies. In a model using mice sensitised by injection of grass pollen allergen in alum, a dose dependent increase in allergen specific IgA in mucosal washings has been observed. The immunological effects of sublingual immunotherapy in mouse models are currently under further investigation.

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A new fast dissolving tablet formulation for grass pollen allergy is currently in clinical trial. Initial safety studies showed excellent safety; grass pollen allergic hay fever patients tolerated doses corresponding to 200 micrograms of major allergen without severe or systemic adverse events. The occurrence of treatment related mild to moderate adverse events including itching, erythema or oedema was dose dependent. In a recent double-blind, placebo controlled multicenter study comprising 114 grass pollen allergic patients with moderate to severe rhinoconjunctivitis with or without mild to moderate asthma, patients on active treatment received 75.000 SQ-T units daily for at least 10 weeks prior to the pollen season, and experienced a 37% reduction in seasonal symptom scores and a simultaneous 41% reduction in rescue medication usage as compared to the placebo group.

In conclusion, sublingual immunotherapy is safe and effective. The new fast dissolving tablet represents an easy to use formulation suitable for daily self treatment at home.

