
ALLERGY SHOTS OR AUTOMOBILES: WHICH IS MORE DANGEROUS?

To the Editor:

It has been, and is becoming more so, an unwritten law in the allergy profession that patients should not give their own allergy immunotherapy at home but rather in the physician's office. I beg to differ.

Please refer to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration statistics of annual automobile fatalities and injuries in recent years. By insisting that patients drive to and from their physician's office for immunotherapy, the resultant death rates are double or quadruple the rates of death from the immunotherapy itself. Injuries and maiming would be hundreds of times greater, theoretically infinitely greater.

Death from immunotherapy is estimated at 1 death per 14 million injections. Injury and maiming deaths are virtually none. Fourteen million round-trip car drives of 5 to 10 miles each way (10 to 20 miles round trip) come to 140 to 280 million miles driven.

The number of automobile death rates in 2003 were 1.48 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. Injuries are 100 per 100 million miles driven. Do the math. Driving for allergy shots could cause 2 to 4 deaths and 140 to 280 injuries per 14 million allergy shots given.

Think about it. Physicians could be sued for the one outcome but not for the other. Is that our only motive for our law? Not patient safety?

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