

Treatment of allergic rhinoconjunctivitis in Denmark

Seasonal allergic rhinoconjunctivitis is a common disorder in Denmark. The cumulated prevalence is estimated at 3-4% of the population (4), equivalent to about 165,000 patients. The main causes are tree pollens (birch, elm and hazel) in the early spring, April to June, and grass pollen during the summer, May to August. The preferred treatment for rhinoconjunctivitis is symptomatic i.e. antihistamines, antihistamine or cromogly-

cate eye drops, cromoglycate or steroids by nasal application, and depot steroids by intramuscular injection. Approximately 3-4% of the patients are treated with allergen-specific hyposensitisation (2).

An attempt is made to estimate the frequencies of the different treatments, based on the increased sale of drugs during the pollen season (Fig. 1) The mean monthly figures for the drugs sold (2) are also shown. The increase in sales from March to August is most likely due to the medicines prescribed for allergic rhinoconjunctivitis. The frequency of the different treatments can be compared by subtracting the basic sale for the months September to March and calculating the drug consumption on a 3-week basis. The following doses have approximately a 3-week effect on symptoms: an injection of depot steroid (1); steroid aerosols containing 200 puffs at 8 puffs per day; 10 ml cromoglycate or antihistamine eyedrops, 2 drops/eye b.i.d., or a 3-week dose of antihistamines 1-2 tablets daily.

Thus taking into account that amount sold does not equal amount used and that more than one drug can be used simultaneously, the drug distribution would be the following:

Drug	Approx. No. treatments	Patients (%)
Antihistamines	77,000	46
Eyedrops	73,000	44
Depot steroids	16,000	12
Nasal steroids	7,000	6

This means that about one half of the patients uses antihistamines and/or eyedrops. It should be taken into consideration that antihistamines are prescription-free in Denmark. Depot steroid injections are prescribed twice as often as locally applied steroids, assumingly by the general practitioners (1). About 3-4% of

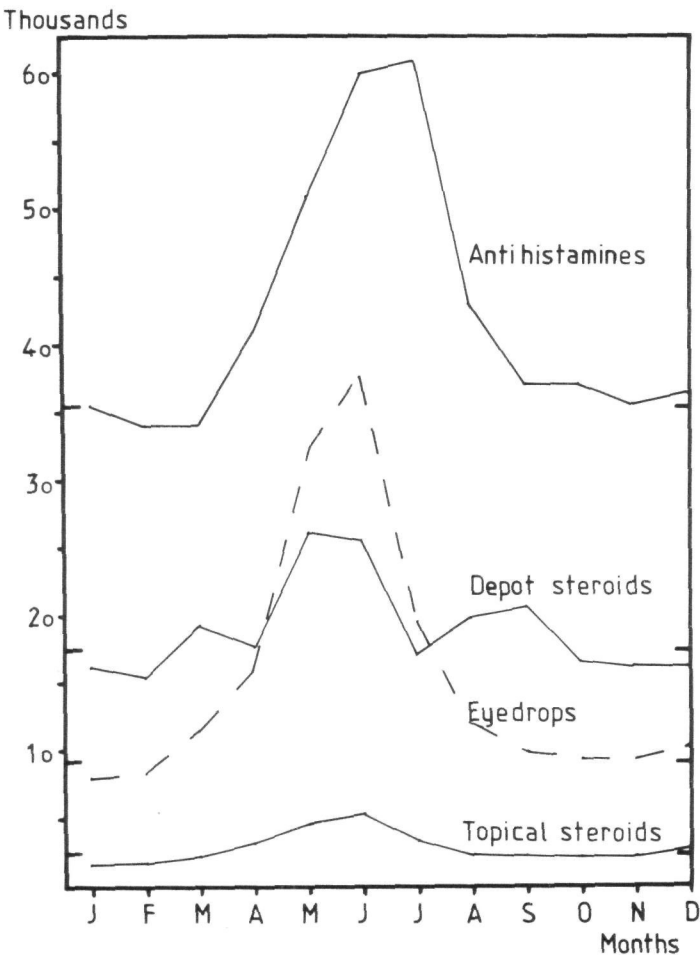


Fig. 1. Number of 3-week treatments in thousands (see text for explanation) calculated as the monthly mean for 1984 and 1985.

patients receive therapy with cromoglycate, calculated as above, or hyposensitisation.

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