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851 Effectiveness of a Pre-seasonal Allergoid Immunotherapy in Patients With Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis Due to Grass Pollen

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INTRODUCTION: Traditional immunotherapy uses regular maintenance injections of allergen throughout the year. Newer strategies use shorter courses of injections in an attempt to achieve better compliance. In this study we evaluated the efficacy and safety of preseasonal treatment with allergoid immunotherapy in patients with hay fever.

METHODS: Thirty five adults with a history of grass pollen allergy took part in a randomised, double blind and placebo controlled study. During the 1st trial year the subjects were given subcutaneous incremental injections of either a depot allergoid (Allergovit®) or a matched placebo at weekly intervals for six weeks. Clinical efficacy was evaluated by subjective assessment of the improvement (visual analogue scale) as well as symptom and medication scores from patients' diary cards.

RESULTS: Data of thirty patients who completed the treatment as per protocol were included in the analysis. There was a significant ($p < 0.05$) improvement in the actively treated group versus the placebo group for the patients' assessment of their condition using the visual analogue scale: The median change on the interval scale was a difference of +4 points for improvement for the actively treated patients as opposed to -1 point representing a worsening of their condition. This success was consistent with results of symptom and medication scores of patients' diaries and with relevant pollen counts. Patients treated with the active preparation showed a reduction in the median combined symptom and medication scores between the 1998 and 1999 pollen seasons, whilst there was an increase in the placebo group. In neither case were the changes statistically significant. Further analyses of immunological results showed a significant increase of specific IgG and decrease of skin prick test reactivity for actively treated patients but not for the placebo group. The preparation was well tolerated and no severe side effects were reported.

CONCLUSION: This study demonstrates that a modified hypoallergenic grass pollen extract is safe and effective in the preseasonal treatment of hay fever with just seven incremental doses.