

MANAGEMENT OF ALLERGIC RHINITIS/CONJUNCTIVITIS PATIENTS USING A PLANT STEROL/STEROLIN MIXTURE: AN OPEN LABELED STUDY OVER 12 WEEKS

PROCEEDING OF THE 26th ANNUAL CONGRESS OF THE PHYSIOLOGY SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, PILANSBERG (1998)

Mrs W Brittle¹, Mrs A Clark¹, Prof P Bouic¹, Dr L Rabie³, Dr M McDonough⁵, Dr J Lamprecht² and Sr M Freestone⁴

Departments of Medical Microbiology¹ and Pharmacology², University of Stellenbosch, MediClinic³, Stellenbosch, Essential Sterolin Products (Pty) Ltd⁴ and MediClinic, Pretoria⁵.

Objectives: Since a natural supplement containing a mixture of sterols/sterolins has been available on the market, it has been used by patients to control their allergic symptoms. Practitioners in the private sector have observed favorable symptom relief and outcomes of this condition due to the use of this supplement. The supplement has subtle immune modulating activities on the functioning of T-helper 1 cells, a mechanism that is defective in allergic conditions. A small pilot study was undertaken to record clinical and laboratory changes in a group of allergic patients consulting private ENT specialists for their symptoms.

Methods: 30 patients were recruited from 2 medical centers and they were evaluated for symptoms (patients reporting using questionnaires) as well as clinical (nasal endoscopy and scans) and laboratory markers). They were provided with the natural supplement and re-evaluated 12 weeks later.

Results: Favorable outcome measures included:

- Significant decreases in circulating IgE levels ($p < 0.01$) with a concomitant increase in the number of circulating T_{H1} type CD4+ cells ($p < 0.01$) and the $T_{H1}:T_{H2}$ ratio ($p < 0.01$). However, no significant changes in SPT's to allergens were measured.
- Significant changes in symptoms included: 75% of patients were less irritable, had less sneezing and post-nasal drip. Fifty-eight % of patients reported that they were less tired due good rest.
- Clinical measurements showed 92% less turbinate hypertrophy and 100% of patients had less rhinorrhea and post-nasal drip.

Conclusions: Due to the favorable outcomes measured in this small group of allergic patients and knowing the non toxic profile of this natural supplement, we feel justified in now conducting a double blind, placebo-controlled study in a larger cohort of allergic patients. This study also confirms the role of this supplement in modulating the TH^1 arm of the immune system.