

Allergy - the bane of modern living

Neil Beattie discusses how isopathy can help

Allergic problems have a major impact on modern society. Allergic diseases are currently calculated to cost the member states of the EU 29 billion ECU per year in medical expenses and work absence alone. One fifth of our children are asthmatic and 85 per cent of these have an allergic basis to their problem. The other commonest allergy-related diseases are eczema, allergic rhinitis, seasonal and perennial, allergic conjunctivitis, and urticaria.

Modern allopathic medicines have proved more and more effective at controlling the symptoms of allergy, either early in the allergic process, such as Cromoglycate for asthma, or late in the process as with antihistamines. Desensitising treatment used to be available as a series of injections but had to be withdrawn after it was shown that one in 100,000 patients was having anaphylactic reactions. Fortunately recent studies in Glasgow have proved the efficacy of isopathic medicines as desensitising agents, and the use of these preparations in the Allergy Clinic at the Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital has shown a clear clinical benefit

to the patients.

Let me explain for anyone who is unsure of the difference between isopathy and homeopathy. Isopathy involves the administration of homeopathically prepared remedies derived from the same material as that responsible for causing a diseased state, in this case an allergic problem. They are thus given on a basis of "Same to treat same" rather than the classical homeopathic principle of "Like to treat like".

"How much simpler to take a course of a safe homeopathic remedy"

The commonest allergens affecting patients at the Allergy Clinic in Glasgow were grass pollens at 48 per cent and the house dust mite at 42 per cent. For hay fever sufferers it is hard to avoid exposure to grass pollens during the summer months but most try to make appropriate lifestyle changes. Long-lasting steroid injections are an effective preventative treatment, but there are

worries about repeated use.

There are now non-sedative antihistamines available and sprays of steroid or antihistamine are gaining in popularity. However, these all require continuous use. How much simpler to take a course of a safe homeopathic remedy at a cost of less than £3. Pre-seasonal use will often give a trouble-free summer but booster courses can be taken. No homeopathic skills are needed, but those who are able to prescribe for their symptoms can safely combine desensitising treatment with appropriate symptomatic treatments such as Euphrasia or Sabadilla.

It is impossible to avoid the house dust mite. Often at the clinic I had to reassure slightly offended mothers that I was not casting aspersions on their house-keeping abilities! House dust mites live in all beds. They are tiny creatures that live on the dead flakes of our skin and it is their faeces that makes patients wheeze or sneeze or both. It sounds quite disgusting but is sadly the truth.

Fortunately there are a few things that we can do to minimise our exposure to the unsavoury beasts. Most chemists can supply a

mattress cover that has such a fine weave that the house dust mites cannot get through to hide in the mattress. Running the vacuum cleaner over it and giving it a wipe will remove both skin scales and mites, lessening the patient's exposure. A popular brand of vacuum cleaner makes a strong play of having a microporous filter to filter out dust mites from its expelled air. This is actually an effective measure and drastically reduces the aerosol effect of using a vacuum without a filter. Anyone who has a house dust mite allergy should only wet-dust, or better still, get someone else to do it!

At the Allergy Clinic in Glasgow, we set out to try and find out the best treatment regime for desensitising allergic patients. Patients were referred by their GP, or specialists in other hospitals, to the Allergy Clinic with a variety of medical problems that were thought to be of an allergic origin. We took a general and allergic history, then carried out a Skin Prick Test to try and identify the problem allergens. At 15 minutes, if the test was positive, the resulting weals were measured, and the allergens accordingly ranked from worst to least. A trace of the weal pattern was taken for record purposes. Patients with negative skin tests were excluded from our study.

All patients were asked to take no antihistamines for seven days before initial attendance at the Allergy Clinic. They then had a four-week run-in control period, daily recording their symptoms and general well-being, before commencing isopathic treatment for the

worst allergen. They were asked to continue recording daily the outcome and returned to the clinic for review after four weeks of taking medication. Other allergens were then treated in the same way at monthly intervals in descending order of severity.

“Many felt able to reduce or discontinue their allopathic medicines”

Patients were randomly allocated to one of the following three treatment groups:

- three powders of the appropriate allergen in the 30th centesimal potency;
- three powders of the appropriate allergen in the

200th centesimal potency;

- one tablet of the appropriate allergen in the 30th centesimal potency twice daily for four weeks.

All patients received a pack containing three powders to be taken on the first day, and 55 tablets to be taken one twice daily for four weeks.

Some 147 patients, mainly suffering from asthma, eczema and allergic rhinitis, were treated in this double blind trial. During the trial, the patients were instructed to continue with their normal medication, but many felt able to reduce or discontinue their allopathic medicines and did so.

A total of 15 per cent of the patients defaulted during their treatment for a variety of reasons. Of those remaining, 87 per cent reported that their allergic symptoms were substantially or completely relieved by the isopathic treatment alone.

For hay fever sufferers it is hard to avoid grass pollens during the summer months



This success was reported across all disease groups and different allergens.

We ended up with a clear winner between the various treatment regimes. The best results were obtained using one tablet of 30c twice daily for four weeks. Using this regime 43 per cent of patients reported complete relief of their symptoms and 89 per cent of patients reported improvement.

About 15 per cent of those referred to the clinic were excluded from the study because their skin test showed no response. There didn't seem to be any rhyme or reason for this but we had to exclude them from the study and treat them by more general prescribing.

Desensitisation is not a substitute for minimising exposure to a known allergen



House dust mites live in all beds but simple measures can reduce them

but sometimes it is impossible to avoid an allergen completely as in the case of a dairy student I treated who had become allergic to cows. A few doses of Cow hair relieved his problem! Sensible precautions should always be taken and allopathic

medicines like inhalers in asthma have a vital role to play. Where an allergen can be identified, however, desensitisation should be considered as it can often make a substantial difference to the quality of life of the patient.

Is your home a health hazard?



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We're continually being told about exterior air pollution, but for many of us pollutants in our homes can aggravate or cause health problems. Dust, dust mites, mould and mildew, and animal dander and other allergens present in most houses can cause sneezing, nasal stuffiness, runny nose, itchy, watery eyes, and asthma. House dust allergy is particularly important because the symptoms are year round rather than seasonal like pollen allergies. Research has shown that reducing mite and allergen levels in homes can lead to an improvement in allergic symptoms and a reduction in the amount of medication needed.

Recent research shows that one in six homes in the UK suffers from damp patches and mildew problems and over one third of all homes in the survey experienced winter problems of steaming windows and condensation. While the average family produces as much as 20 pints of moisture in the home each day -

generated from breathing, showering, washing, cooking and tumble drying - dust mites are having a field day and those who are susceptible to allergies and asthma find their symptoms worsening.

One answer to the problem of excess humidity is to increase ventilation by opening windows and using extractor fans. However this means heat loss and may present a security risk when people aren't at home. Double glazing may solve condensation problems on windows but the excess moisture in the air will find the next coldest surface - usually in an unheated room - causing mould, peeling paper or crumbling plaster.

Another solution is to use a dehumidifier which extracts excess moisture from the air which is then cleaned and warmed before being returned to the room. One dehumidifier, placed strategically, will remove excess moisture from the whole of a three to four bed roomed house.