Long-term effects of allergen-specific subcutaneous immunotherapy for house dust mite induced allergic rhinitis

P Karthikeyan, D T Pulimoottil and R Sankar

Department of Otorhinolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery, Mahatma Gandhi Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth University, Pondicherry, India

Dear Editors,

We read with interest the article titled 'Long-term effects of allergen-specific subcutaneous immunotherapy for house dust mite induced allergic rhinitis', by Sahin et al.,1 in your esteemed journal. This is a well-written article, and we would like to commend the authors on a good effort, as long-term follow up of patients is often so difficult in clinical practice. The article does throw up a few issues though, and we would like to add our views on some of them here.

The study involves the follow up of 20 patients over a 10-year period. We do understand the significant problems encountered in any follow-up study, especially in terms of patient compliance for follow up. However, given the small sample size, we feel the significance of the results should be considered cautiously. As allergic rhinitis is such a common condition, further studies involving a much larger sample size would lend further significance to the results and would definitely help in the shaping of future policies in regard to allergen-specific subcutaneous immunotherapy. Even still, we do laud the authors for a commendable effort.

The fact that subcutaneous immunotherapy is especially efficacious in patients with allergic rhinitis and significantly improves their quality of life has been quite well established in multiple meta-analyses.2 However, as the authors rightly pointed out, the need for repeated injections and the real risk for serious adverse effects associated with subcutaneous immunotherapy does seem to limit its widespread use. In this context, the future of immunotherapy may belong to sublingual immunotherapy. A study by Wang et al.3 showed a fast onset of action with sublingual immunotherapy in house dust mite induced allergic rhinitis. With an average adherence rate of 75–90 per cent,4 sublingual immunotherapy appears to be a more attractive choice for future studies regarding the long-term outcomes of immunotherapy.

Apart from sublingual immunotherapy, other routes of immunotherapy administration, such as nasal and oral immunotherapy, need to be explored in greater detail. Fewer adverse effects and better patient compliance may be crucial to allergic rhinitis patients being free of asthma.

References

1 Sahin E, Dizdar D, Dinc ME, Cirik AA. Long-term effects of allergen-specific subcutaneous immunotherapy for house dust mite induced allergic rhinitis. J Laryngol Otol 2017;131:997–1001

Authors’ reply

E Sahin¹, D Dizdar², M E Dinc³ and A A Cirik⁴

¹Department of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery, Bayindir Hospital İcerenkoy, Istanbul, ²Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Medical Park Bahçelievler Hospital, Faculty of Medicine, Istanbul Kemerburgaz University, Istanbul, ³Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Gaziosmanpasa Taksim Education and Research Hospital, Turkish Ministry of Health, Istanbul and ⁴Department of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery, Umranliye Research and Training Hospital, Istanbul, Turkey

Dear Editors,

In response to the letter regarding our article titled ‘Long-term effects of allergen-specific subcutaneous immunotherapy for house dust mite induced allergic rhinitis’, we would like to thank the author for adding these important points.