

Fewer problems with dry nasal mucous membranes following local use of sesame oil

T. Björk-Eriksson¹, M. Gunnarsson¹, M. Holmström², A. Nordqvist³, B. Petruson⁴

¹ Department of Oncology, Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Göteborg, Sweden

² Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Akademiska University Hospital, Uppsala, Sweden

³ Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Västra Frölunda Specialist Hospital, Göteborg, Sweden

⁴ Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Göteborg, Sweden

SUMMARY

Many people experience problems with a dry nasal mucous membrane, often without wondering why. Their noses itch and burn and dried mucus collects there. These problems are exacerbated during the winter, in air-conditioned environments and after nasal irradiation.

Twenty patients experiencing problems with dryness of the nose were selected from outpatient clinics, together with twenty patients who had previously undergone nasal irradiation.

During the first five days no treatment was administered. For the following twenty days the patients sprayed sesame oil into each nostril three times a day. For the last five days no treatment was given.

When both groups received treatment and sprayed sesame oil (NozoilTM) in their noses, the nasal problems decreased significantly. The greatest effect is exerted on dryness. The side effects from using this oil are few in number and mild.

Key words: irradiation, nasal dryness, NozoilTM, sesame oil

INTRODUCTION

The fact that people could experience problems in the nose in the form of irritation and dryness was documented 2,500 years ago. The same reference also mentioned that the best treatment was to drip sesame oil into the nose (Kassel, 1967).

Nowadays, this problem is known as rhinitis anterior sicca, and is relatively common, especially when the air humidity is low, as it is during the winter, and in a dry air-conditioned environment. Many elderly people also experience problems as a result of reduced secretion from the nasal mucous membrane. They experience itching and burning at the front of their noses.

Most patients who undergo radiotherapy directed at the nasal mucous membrane subsequently experience problems of dryness and dried mucus in their noses. Some of them also experience nasal blockage. In a study in Florida, 9 patients were examined an average of 55 months after the completion of radiotherapy involving an average dose of 70 Gy and it was found that none of them had functioning cilia and their ability to transport saccharine was non-existent (Stringer et al., 1995). These patients also experienced more nasal blockage and more mucus formation, but they did not suffer from more infections in the nose and sinuses. It is known from animal experiments that the activity of the cilia is destroyed for a long period following the irradiation of the nose at doses as low as 4 Gy, and that

the mucous membrane is transformed into squamous epithelium (Ohashi et al., 1988).

A common form of treatment for patients who have received nasal radiation has been to begin by rinsing the inside of the nose with saline solution, and then to drop peanut oil, purchased at a pharmacy, into the nose using a pipette. For several years now sesame oil of medical grade has been available in nasal spray. The 1999-2000 edition of the Swedish Drug Information Book recommends this oil (NozoilTM) as a treatment for patients with rhinitis anterior sicca (Stjernqvist et al., 1999).

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of this oil on a group of patients seeking treatment from an otorhinolaryngologist for dryness of the nose, and a group of patients who had received radiotherapy resulting in a dry nasal mucous membrane. The incidence of side effects and the patients' willingness to continue the treatment was also studied.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Patients with dryness of the nose

Twenty patients experiencing problems with dryness of the nose who were willing to participate in a study of NozoilTM were selected from the out-patient clinic at the Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Huddinge University Hospital, and at the Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Västra Frölunda Specialist Hospital, Göteborg, Sweden. Their average age was 59 (range