

as a pilot trial for a more extensive study elsewhere.

Results

Three patients stated that they were already taking the 'pill' (presumably prescribed by the Family Planning Clinic), and two more that they were about to do so. Hysterectomy had been carried out in two patients and one other was having no marital relationships. One had to be excluded because the answers on the form were mutually contradictory and the other because the only reason, given under section (e), was vague.

The remaining 51 patients gave the following reasons for not using an oral contraceptive.

Not trying to avoid pregnancy	7
Religious objections	1
Satisfied with present methods	29
Frightened it would make her ill	25
Husband frightened it would make wife ill	8
Too expensive	0
Advised not to take oral contraceptive for medical reasons	3

These add up to more than 51 because a number of patients gave more than one reason.

Certain interesting conclusions can be drawn from what is admittedly a small and imperfectly designed study. It has to be assumed that those who did not reply are distinguished only from those who did so by lack of interest, a distrust of the anonymity of the study or mere laziness. Within these limitations the figures point to the following facts:

1. About 90 per cent of married women are trying to avoid pregnancy at any one time (25 per cent on the "pill" and 85 per cent of the remaining 75 per cent).
2. In an area without a large Roman Catholic population, religious objections are surprisingly rare.
3. More than half of those who do not take the "pill" (representing 40 per cent of all married women of child-bearing age), would be frightened to do so whether or not they are satisfied with their present method. Sometimes their husbands are equally or more worried about its effect. This figure might now be larger as a result of subsequent adverse publicity and it reflects the enormous influence of the press in discouraging the use of what many doctors feel to be a most satisfactory and a reasonably safe method of contraception.
4. The cost of oral contraception worries nobody in the affluent society.

THERAPEUTIC TRIAL

A comparative study of two long-acting antihistamines

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IN A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF the effectiveness of two formulations of pheniramine it was suggested on the basis of a short retrospective comparison that this drug was preferred to chlorpheniramine maleate B.P. It was decided to investigate this finding further in a prospective manner as the fallibility of retrospective studies is well known. A study was therefore planned

to compare the long-acting form of chlorpheniramine (Piriton spandets—Allen & Hanbury's) with that of pheniramine (Daneral-S.A. tablets—Hoechst Pharmaceuticals).

Method

Patients with typical hay fever symptoms were asked to compare the efficacy of the two drugs. In a random manner they were given one week's supply of Piriton spandets or alternatively an equivalent supply of Daneral-S.A. tablets. In both cases the patients were requested to start on a dose of one daily in the morning and add another at night if required. After a week's treatment, the patients were seen again and their comments upon efficacy and side effects noted. They were then changed to the alternative therapy and after a further week were asked which of the two treatments they preferred.

Results

One hundred and four patients commenced the study. Results are available for 96 patients. Six patients did not return after the initial consultation, one failed to attend for the second assessment and one, having improved on initial therapy (Daneral-S.A.), declined to change his treatment. The age and sex distribution of the patients is given in table I. All but five patients had suffered previously from hay fever.

TABLE I
AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF PATIENTS

	<i>Under 25 years</i>	<i>25 years and over</i>	<i>Total</i>
Male	32	24	56
Female	17	23	40
Total	49	47	96

The individual preferences are given in table II.

TABLE II
PREFERENCE FOR DRUG AND DOSAGE

<i>Drug</i>	<i>Dosage</i>	
Piriton spandets	One daily	9
Piriton spandets	Two daily	25 > 34
Daneral-S.A. tablets	One daily	23
Daneral-S.A. tablets	Two daily	23 > 46
Equally effective		4
Failures		12

As can be seen from the above table, 46 patients preferred Daneral-S.A. and of these 50 per cent were adequately controlled on a dose of one tablet daily. Of the 34 patients who preferred Piriton spandets, only 26.5 per cent were adequately controlled on a single daily dose. The preference related to the order of administration is set out in table III.

It will be seen that the order in which the drugs were taken did not effect the eventual preference.

There was no significant difference between the incidence of drowsiness on the two preparations, nor was there a direct relationship between side effects and dosage. Only those patients who suffered drowsiness to an incapacitating degree are included in this table. The total incidence of side effects was 17.7 per cent.

TABLE III
PREFERENCE BY ORDER OF ADMINISTRATION

<i>Order of administration</i>	<i>Piriton spandets one daily</i>	<i>Piriton spandets two daily</i>	<i>Daneral- S.A. tablets one daily</i>	<i>Daneral- S.A. tablets two daily</i>	<i>Equally effective</i>	<i>Failures</i>	<i>Total</i>
Daneral-S.A. first	3	12	11	9	1	6	42
Piriton spandets first	6	13	12	14	3	6	54
Totals	9	25	23	23	4	12	96

TABLE IV
SIDE EFFECTS

	<i>On Piriton spandets only</i>	<i>On Daneral- S.A. only</i>	<i>On both drugs</i>	<i>Total</i>
Drowsiness	6	5	3	14
Tiredness	—	1	—	1
G.I.T. upset	—	1	1	2

Discussion

The original finding noted earlier is extended by this study, which shows that under the conditions of the investigation more patients preferred the longer acting preparation of pheniramine (Daneral-S.A.) to that of chlorpheniramine (Piriton spandets). The respective manufacturers' claims for duration of action and dosage are supported by the results. In particular it will be seen that few patients can be controlled on a single daily dose of Piriton spandets (9 per cent) whilst many more are controlled on Daneral-S.A. (24 per cent).

Summary

A simple comparative study in general practice of two long-acting antihistamines in the treatment of hay fever is reported. 50.2 per cent of patients preferred Daneral-S.A. and 39.8 per cent preferred Piriton spandets. Dosage preferences are recorded and the side effects of the two formulations are described.

REFERENCE

Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners. (1969) 17, 393.

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