

ORIGINAL PAPER

A randomized placebo-controlled pilot study of Cat saliva 9cH and Histaminum 9cH in cat allergic adults

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Background: Cat allergy is an abnormal immune response by the body to cat dander or saliva, leading to the development of a complex of symptoms which can negatively influence health. Cat saliva 9cH and Histaminum 9cH are indicated, according to isopathic principles, for the treatment of cat allergy, however no research has been done to date.

Aim: To determine the effect of Cat saliva 9cH and Histaminum 9cH (combined) on cat allergic adults.

Method: 30 Participants with a positive test result for a cat allergy skin prick test (SPT) were recruited to a double-blind, randomised, placebo controlled clinical trial. Participants took two tablets twice daily for 4 weeks, and attended a follow-up consultation at the end of weeks 2 and 4. The measurement tool used was the SPT, conducted at the beginning and at the end of the study.

Results: Cat saliva 9cH and Histaminum 9cH produced a highly statistically significant reduction in the wheal diameter of the cat allergen SPT at the end of week 4. The placebo group showed no statistically significant change.

Conclusion: The homeopathic medicine reduced the sensitivity reaction of cat allergic adults to cat allergen, according to the SPT. Future studies are warranted to further investigate the effect of Cat saliva and Histaminum and their role as a potential therapeutic option for this condition. *Homeopathy* (2013) 102, 123–129.

Keywords: Cat allergy; Homeopathy; Isopathy; Sarcodes; Complex; Cat saliva; Histaminum

Introduction

In urban areas cats are the most typical household pets, and an important source of indoor allergens.¹ Cat allergies are extremely prevalent, with the sensitization rate reaching up to 60% in western countries.² According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) 15–30% of people in the USA are allergic to their pets,

with cat allergies being twice as common as dog allergies.³ Cat allergy is a type 1 hypersensitivity reaction by the body's immune system to cats. Symptoms are due to a histamine reaction to the cat glycoprotein cal Fel d1, which is secreted by the sebaceous glands of the cat and can be found in cat saliva and dander. Cat allergies may initiate or exacerbate conditions such as hayfever, asthma and atopic dermatitis. Symptoms of cat allergy range from mild rhinopharyngitis to potentially life-threatening acute asthmatic attacks and anaphylaxis.^{4,5}

Diagnosis of cat allergy can be made on clinical history and by the use of the RAST (radioallergosorbent test), MAST (multiple allergen simultaneous test) or the skin prick test (SPT). The SPT is cost effective and considered the most important diagnostic tool in clinical practice.⁶

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Skin prick testing involves introducing a tiny amount of allergen extract to the area of the skin which has been punctured. If the patient is allergic to the substance an inflammatory reaction will be visible within 15 minutes. The diameter of the wheal that forms is measured.^{7,8} Adverse effects from the SPT may include urticaria, and in very rare cases, anaphylaxis.⁶ Skin prick testing with domestic pet allergens shows good correlation with blood specific IgE testing.^{7,8} The SPT was chosen for this study as it is reliable, simple to use and a cost effective form of allergy testing.⁹

Avoidance of known offending allergens remains the most effective means of managing allergic conditions; however this may often prove impossible, as many people with cat allergies continue to own cats as pets. Conventional treatment for allergies comprises pharmacotherapy and immunotherapy. Pharmacological agents such as anti-histamines and decongestants are commonly prescribed, although these are merely palliative, may have adverse effects; tolerance develops in many patients.¹⁰

Specific immunotherapy is a process of reducing sensitivity to a specific allergen, whereby the patient is gradually vaccinated with increasingly larger doses of that allergen.¹¹ Immunotherapy requires a 3–5 year period of injections¹² and although helpful for many allergy sufferers when prescribed in the correct therapeutic dosage range, it is ineffective or only partially effective for some allergy patients.^{13–16} Side effects include local pain, redness and swelling of the injection site, and systemic reactions such as hives, sneezing and congestion, and in severe cases anaphylaxis.¹⁷ Sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT) is the oral version of specific immunotherapy. While SLIT is considered a much safer option with fewer side effects,^{11,18} one major disadvantage is that it is more expensive.¹⁷ SLIT therapy for cat allergy desensitization is not yet available in South Africa.

Various studies have been conducted on the use of homeopathic remedies in the treatment of allergies, many of which yielded positive findings.¹⁹ In 1986, Reilly et al. conducted a randomised controlled trial (RCT) involving 144 patients suffering from hayfever. This compared the effects of a homeopathic preparation of mixed grass pollens with a placebo. The treatment group had a statistically significant improvement in hayfever symptoms when compared to the placebo group, and a greater decrease in the need for anti-histamines.²⁰ In 1994, Reilly et al. examined the use of potentised allergens in the treatment of asthma. In this double-blind, placebo-controlled RCT, the homeopathic group again had a better outcome than the placebo group, with a greater reduction in bronchial reactivity, and a median 53% increase in histamine resistance (placebo group median 7%).²¹ In another RCT with crossover conducted by Taylor et al. on 51 patients with perennial allergic rhinitis, participants in the treatment group received a 30C potency of their main aeroallergen. While both groups showed a reduction in symptoms, the treatment group had greater improvements in nasal airflow from baseline. There was however no statistically significant difference in symptom improvement between the two groups.²²

Lewith et al. (2002) conducted a 16-week study on the use of potentised house dust mite in the treatment of asthmatic people with a predominant house dust mite allergy. No statistical difference was found between the homeopathic and placebo groups with regards to their forced expiratory volume (FEV₁) in 1 s, their mood or quality of life. The effect of the remedy on the SPT or IgE levels was however not assessed.²³ Kim et al. conducted a 4-week, double-blind clinical trial on adults with seasonal allergic rhinitis. A homeopathic preparation (6×) of the common aeroallergens in the geographical area was administered. The treatment group showed statistically significant improvement of quality of life, and a reduction in work productivity and activity impairment. No adverse effects were reported.²⁴

A comparative study was conducted between specific SLIT (grass pollens, house dust mite or cockroach) and homeopathic therapy (Poumon Histaminum and Apis mellifica) on 74 children with allergic rhinitis. Participants with persistent allergic rhinitis were treated for 12 months, and those with intermittent allergic rhinitis for 5 months. Measurement tools included a symptom diary, a paediatric rhino-conjunctivitis quality of life questionnaire, SPTs, specific IgE antibodies tests and nasal eosinophilia tests. Both methods were associated with symptomatic improvements, it was concluded that the homeopathic treatment was generally more effective and better tolerated than the SLIT.²⁵

Histaminum is a sarcode made from histamine and is believed to reduce allergic reactions by countering the effect of histamine on the body.²⁶ The effect of Histaminum on basophils has been explored in several *in vitro* studies. Basophils play a key role in the immediate allergic response, releasing inflammatory chemical mediators in response to antigen exposure. Many of these studies found that Histaminum appears to have a significant inhibitory effect on basophil activation; however the results are not yet conclusive.

Two recent studies have confirmed that Histamine in high dilutions inhibits histamine release.^{19,27,28} Heteroisopathy is a type of iso-therapeutics whereby a substance is taken from the patients' surroundings that is believed to play a role in the aetiology of their allergy.²⁹ Cat saliva in potency was therefore chosen based on isopathic principles, i.e. 'same cures same'. It was hypothesized that these two remedies in combination would possibly have a desensitizing effect to cat allergen, as seen on the SPT.

The purpose of this double-blind placebo-controlled pilot study was to determine the effect of Cat saliva 9cH and Histaminum 9cH on cat allergic adults, by means of a SPT.

Material and methods

This research study was approved by The Faculty of Health Sciences Academic Ethics Committee (AEC44/02-2010) and Higher Degrees Committee (HDC44/02-2010) at the University of Johannesburg. The study was conducted at the Homeopathic Health Training

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