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SFORL Guidelines

Consensus document for prescription of nebulization in rhinology

V. Prulière-Escabasse[a,*], J. Michel[b], J. Percodani[c], E. Serrano[c], L. Gilain[d], L. Crampette[e], R. Jankowski[f], D. Stoll[g], L. de Gabory[g], Work group of the French Society of Otorhinolaryngology (SFORL)

[a] Service d'ORL et de chirurgie cervico-faciale, centre hospitalier intercommunal de Créteil, 40, avenue de Verdun, 94000 Créteil, France
[b] Service d'ORL et de chirurgie cervico-faciale, hôpital de La Timone, centre hospitalier universitaire, 264, rue Saint-Pierre, 13385 Marseille, France
[c] Service d'ORL et de chirurgie cervico-faciale, hôpital Larrey, centre hospitalier universitaire, 24, chemin de Pouvourville, 31059 Toulouse, France
[d] Service d'ORL et de chirurgie cervico-faciale, hôpital Montpied, centre hospitalier universitaire, 58, rue Montalembert, 63003 Clermont-Ferrand, France
[e] Service d'ORL et de chirurgie cervico-faciale, hôpital Gui-de-Chauliac, centre hospitalier universitaire, 80, avenue Augustin-Fliche, 34295 Montpellier, France
[f] Service d'ORL et de chirurgie cervico-faciale, hôpital Central, centre hospitalier universitaire, 29, avenue du Maréchal-de-Lattre-de-Tassigny, 54035 Nancy, France
[g] Service d'ORL et de chirurgie cervico-faciale, hôpital Pellegrin, centre hospitalier universitaire, place Amélie-Raba-Léon, 33076 Bordeaux, France

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The French Society of ORL set up a work group to draw up a consensus document on the prescription of nebulization in rhinology. The document deals with the principles of and indications for rhinologic aerosol therapy.
Materials and methods: The work group's methodology followed the rules published by the French health authority (Haute Autorité de santé [HAS]) in January 2006: "Methodological foundations for drawing up professional guidelines by formalized consensus" (available on the HAS website at http://www.has-sante.fr). The method used is the short version (without editorial group) of the RAND/UCLA Appropriateness Method; the short version was chosen because this particular consensus conference was dealing with a very precise topic with very few experts in the field.
Results: Sonic aerosol therapy with nasal plug is the preferred modality, delivering treatment into the middle meati. The group recommends that drugs with market authorization for use in bronchopulmonary pathology should be nebulized in two 10-minute sessions per day for at least seven days. Indications for rhinologic aerosol therapy are: purulent edematous rhinosinusitis, subacute rhinosinusitis (4–12 weeks' evolution), exacerbations of chronic rhinosinusitis, and postoperative (>1 month) rhinosinus suppuration. Audiometric monitoring is required in iterative aminoside nebulization.
Conclusion: Rhinologic aerosol therapy can be used in purulent edematous rhinosinusitis, subacute rhinosinusitis, exacerbations of chronic rhinosinusitis and postoperative rhinosinus suppuration. The rules for prescription contained in the present document optimize efficacy.

1. Introduction

Nebulization is a widely used means of drug delivery to the upper and lower airways. Its theoretic advantage over classic means of delivery is that it directly reaches the target organ, avoiding systemic side effects and enhancing local efficacy. It is mainly used in pneumology; pneumologic nebulization shows proven efficacy for drugs such as bronchodilators, corticosteroids, mucolytics and antibiotics. The number of specialties in which lower-airway nebulization has market authorization and the number of studies published on the subject testify to the liveliness of the field. Few publications, however, have been devoted to ENT nebulization, and only one drug (gomenol) has market authorization here. On the other hand, the NUAGES survey of the use and perspectives of nebulization in general and specialized medicine (*nébulisation, usages et avenir en médecine générale et spécialisée*), performed in France in 2005, clearly showed that prescription of nebulization is most widespread in pneumology with ENT coming a very close second, 89% of ENT physicians prescribing aerosol therapies by nebulization [1]. While there are no guidelines for ENT nebulization, the

* Corresponding author.

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NUAGES survey revealed practitioners' interest in and actual use of it. The consensus document requested by the SFORL aims to draw up guidelines as an aid to prescription of ENT nebulization.

2. Theoretic foundations and aerosol deposition

Aerosols are defined in physical terms as a system of particle suspension in gas. In medical aerosols, particle size is of the order of a micrometer. The aerosols produced by different generation systems have particles of differing sizes. Two main parameters describe particle size distribution: mass median aerodynamic diameter (MMAD) represents median particle size; and geometric standard deviation represents the scatter around the MMAD. The main physical mechanisms determining particle deposition in the airway are directly governed by particle size [2]. In nasal inhalation, larger particles are mainly deposited in the upper airway: 90% for 10 μm particles, 50% for 5 μm and 10% for 2 μm [3,4]. On entering the nostrils, the aerosol is intercepted by the vibrissae, which constitute a first large particle filter. The nasal valve, where upper airway diameter is smallest and air-speed highest, is the site of maximal deposition [3]. The turbinate region is the second most important bottleneck inducing deposition, with diameter varying over the nasal cycle. Sinus deposition is controversial but seems to be due to pressure difference between the sinus and nose [5]; it varies with individual anatomy and is proportional to ostial diameter; the optimal particle size to reach the sinuses may be 0.7–10 μm [6].

In oral inhalation, the guidelines identify deposition sites according to particle size [7]. Particles with aerodynamic diameter >5 μm are deposited mainly in the oral cavity, larynx and trachea; those with aerodynamic diameter 4–5 μm, in the bronchi; and those with aerodynamic diameter 0.5–4 μm, in the deep lung. Particles <0.5 μm are too fine to be deposited and get exhaled.

Ventilation parameters also affect deposition. Particle speed is determined by the generator and influenced by the individual patient. Rapid inspiration accelerates the particles and increases deposition in the upper airway. Individual airway anatomy strongly affects inspiration hydraulics and thus deposition.

It follows that nasal nebulization is preferable for targeting the nasal cavities. A nasal plug should be used; in patients for whom this is not feasible, a mask is preferable to a mouth end-piece.

Guideline 1
Nebulization should enable deposition over the entire nasal cavity surface, including medial meatus – unlike sprays, with which deposition is essentially anterior. Strong agreement.

3. Aerosol generators

There are various ways of producing ENT aerosols. Two categories may be distinguished. Sprays are ready-to-use devices already containing the drug; nebulizers need to be prepared by introducing the drug into the reservoir. Sprays are portable, for instantaneous dose delivery; nebulizers tend to be heavier and require several minutes' inhalation.

Sprays produce large particles (10–150 μm) at high speed, with deposition mainly in the anterior centimeters of the cavity [8]; the entire dose is deposited within the cavity. Nebulizers produce slower and smaller particles (1–10 μm), with more distal deposition [9–11]; they can target regions (e.g., sinus) not reached by sprays, with significantly longer drug residence (1.2 h vs. 14 min) [10]. Even so, only 5-20% of the mass in the reservoir gets deposited in the nasal cavity; the shortfall is due to a large residual quantity of drug left in the nebulizer and a large amount of aerosol lost to the air during expiration.

There are three main types of nebulizers: pneumatic nebulizers use compressed air; ultrasonic nebulizers use high-frequency piezoelectric quartz vibration; and mesh nebulizers use the vibration of a microperforated mesh. Pneumatic nebulizers have the advantage that they can be used with any liquid preparation and are robust and easy to maintain. Ultrasonic nebulizers do not work with certain preparations: e.g., with high viscosity or in suspension. Mesh nebulizers are subject to viscosity and surface tension effects, but are silent in operation and small in size.

Some devices have additional functions to enhance upper airway deposition. The sonic function adds a sound-wave to the aerosol to improve maxillary sinus penetration and deposition. Studies on the operating principles of these devices go back to the 1950s: the principle is to induce acoustic hyperpressure in the ostium, displacing the air and aerosol toward the maxillary sinuses. Several in-vitro studies on models of varying sophistication demonstrated the benefit of introducing sound [12–14], but only very recently has it been demonstrated in humans, in scintigraphic studies [10,15,16]. Sinus deposition is 3–5-fold greater [17] than with a nebulizer without sonic boost.

The manosonic function is a derivative of this sonic function, adding hyperpressure to create positive pressure in the nasal cavities; this is automatically applied in the nose at the exact moment of swallowing, so as to transfer the aerosol toward the Eustachian tube. Systems with this extra function are known as manosonic aerosol generators.

Guideline 2
Nebulizers with additional sonic vibration are recommended in rhinosinus pathology. Ultrasonic aerosols are suitable for bronchopulmonary pathology. Strong agreement.

Guideline 3
Nasal plugs are to be preferred. Mouth end-pieces are reserved to laryngeal and bronchopulmonary applications. Strong agreement.

Guideline 4
Oro-nasal masks cause deposition on the face and within the oral cavity and should be reserved to patients unable to use a nasal plug. Strong agreement.

Guideline 5
Active substances should not be diluted for last-generation nebulizers, as residual volume is slight. Relative agreement.

Guideline 6
Nebulization time depends on drug volume, and should not exceed 10 minutes. Strong agreement.