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Title

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Journal

Proceedings of UCLA Health, 27(1)

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Publication Date

2023-06-15

CLINICAL VIGNETTE

Allergy Treatment for Bladder Pain

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Interstitial Cystitis (IC) is a syndrome that is more common in women than men. It is also known as Bladder Pain Syndrome (BPS). Little is known about the pathogenesis of interstitial cystitis and typically there is no known cause.¹ This condition will be referred to as IC/BPS (interstitial cystitis/bladder pain syndrome) moving forward.

Clinical features include unpleasant sensation in the bladder, urgency, pelvic pain, frequency, suprapubic pain and low back pain. Many patients have poor quality of life due to this.²

Case

A 53-year-old woman with interstitial cepatitis presents to Allergy for evaluation to see if “my allergies can be causing bladder pain”. She had years of urinary symptoms (dysuria, bladder pain, urgency) and was evaluated by urology and told she had interstitial cystitis. She had some improvement with physical therapy. Interestingly, she also noticed that when she took loratadine for seasonal allergy symptoms the burning sensation in her urethra resolved. She reported consistent relationship with allergy and her bladder symptoms and sought further evaluation to see if further treatment could be done.

Allergy history includes rhinitis since childhood. January is her peak season and typically she will take fluticasone nasal spray occasionally to help with symptoms. She has nasal congestion, post nasal drip, itchy eyes and itchy throat during that season and sometimes throughout the year.

Percutaneous testing was done for environmental allergens during her visit. She was found to be allergic to trees, grasses and weeds. Subcutaneous allergen immunotherapy (SCIT) was offered, and she was initiated on SCIT shortly thereafter. Follow up 6 months after SCIT was initiated, she reported complete resolution of her bladder symptoms. She has continued to be on SCIT for 3 years and continues to have resolution of bladder symptoms.

She also reported resolution of her allergic rhinitis symptoms. She remains off all allergy medications and medication for bladder symptoms. She is incredibly pleased with her progress.

Historically, allergen immunotherapy has been used to treat algorithm for allergic rhinitis, allergic asthma, and allergic conjunctivitis and is very effective for these conditions.³ Limited studies have examined any relationship between

allergic cells and IC/BPS. One study, by Lynes in 1987, showed a relationship between mast cells and interstitial cystitis pathology, which was an indication of allergic cells playing a role in the bladder.⁴ This was later confirmed in a study by Peeker, showing inappropriate mast cell activation in the bladder of patients with IC/BPS.⁵

This case shows possible treatment option for patients with IC/BPS, especially if they experience rhinitis type symptoms. ICS/BPS is a chronic and difficult to treat condition and these patients may benefit greatly from treatment option designed to help allergies.

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