

EZ Allergy

The Tale of a Little Girl and a Little Tablet

A little girl almost died from side effects of common allergy medications. The FDA approved a little tablet that delivers allergen immunotherapy under the tongue at home to children as young as 5 years of age, reducing or eliminating the need for medications, and replacing allergy shots in many patients.

The little tablet sounds like a good fit for the little girl, right? Yes, in theory. But, sadly, she never received allergen immunotherapy because she suffered her side effect in 2009 and the tablet wasn't approved until 2014. Allergy shots were her only option, but, at 6 years of age, she was too young for shots and her family was too busy for weekly visits to a doctor's office.

Our new business, EZ Allergy, was designed to provide "EZ" access to "EZ" allergen immunotherapy to reduce or eliminate the need for medications.

Will the formation of our business produce the expected benefits for allergy sufferers? We are hopeful, but face several obstacles. Societal awareness is very low about the benefits of allergen immunotherapy in general and the availability of the new tablet in particular. At the recent Peters Township Community Day, we surveyed attendees. More than 90% preferred therapy made by nature rather than man, and allergen immunotherapy by tablet rather than shot. However, few were aware that medications are man-made and allergen immunotherapy is nature-made.

Yes, grass extracts used in allergen immunotherapy are literally harvested from fields of grass in the United States. Since grass pollen causes the immune system to produce allergy, it's natural that any curative or preventive pathways will use the same grass pollen to redirect the immune system. Because the immune system has incredible built-in memory, allergy is a chronic condition that requires long-term treatment – and progresses if left untreated. Indeed, allergen immunotherapy has been shown to prevent allergy symptoms, produce sustained benefit after discontinuation, reduce or eliminate the need for medications, and prevent the development of new allergies and asthma.

Medications, such as antihistamines and nasal steroid sprays, target specific mediators of allergic inflammation but not the underlying immune system abnormality. They are merely short-term "band-aids" for allergy symptoms, with no sustained benefits, and therefore must be used long term. They produce smaller degrees of benefit than allergen immunotherapy and can produce side effects like those suffered by the little girl who used allergy medications long term (www.macisteams.org).

Allergy shots are given in a doctor's office weekly during a build-up phase lasting nine months, then monthly during a maintenance phase lasting five years. In contrast, there are two ways to use grass allergy tablets: daily for three years, or pre-seasonally for three months and co-seasonally. Grass pollen season typically begins in May and ends in August. Tablets for grass pollen allergy therefore begin in February



and end in August of each year, allowing six months of the year to be treatment free.

Any allergen immunotherapy can cause anaphylaxis, but it is much less common with tablets than with shots. Everyone on allergen immunotherapy needs a prescription for an auto-injectable epinephrine. Tablets often produce itching in the mouth that clears with time.

Ragweed season is quickly approaching. There is an allergy tablet for ragweed. Also, an allergy tablet for house dust mite was recently approved by the FDA. So, the armamentarium to fight allergies the EZ way is increasing!

Make an appointment at EZ Allergy to determine if you qualify for EZ allergy tablet therapy now (724.655.3000, ezallergy.net)!

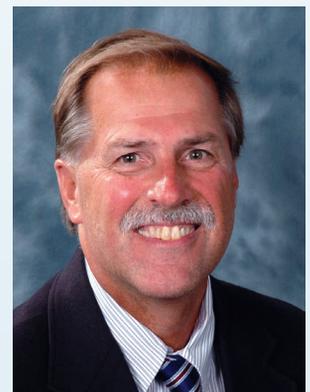
This **Industry Insight** was written by Dr. David P. Skoner.

Dr. David P. Skoner is board certified in both Pediatrics and Allergy-Immunology. He has had teaching, research, administrative and patient care roles at many prestigious universities, including the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Temple University School of Medicine and West Virginia University School of Medicine.

Dr. Skoner has been recognized as one of the "Most Influential Doctors" by USA Today and "A Top Doctor" by U.S. News. He has written more than 250 articles and given more than 500 presentations on respiratory disease in over 60 countries on six continents.

He also co-founded the Nemaconlin International Asthma Conference, now in its 12th year.

Dr. Skoner has established two nonprofit organizations, For Your Good Health—designed to keep children with allergy and asthma active—and Maci's TEAMS, aimed at keeping those children safe on medications.



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