

Cochrane Corner

Another old remedy may be a 'new' treatment for acne: using the Cochrane controlled trials register

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This trial was found by using acne and trimethoprim in the Cochrane controlled trials register.

The problem

I have been seeing a 22-year-old Indian man with moderate acne. He gets no benefit from erythromycin nor doxycycline but does get a very quick response (less than two weeks) from co-trimoxazole. He is keen to keep taking it but I am hesitant due to concerns about the effect this could have on his bone marrow.

The solution

I was reading the article by Dr Amanda Oakley in the December 2005 edition of the *NZFP* in which she suggested oral trimethoprim as a treatment for acne. This made sense in terms of my patient's response to co-trimoxazole. I was aware that it could be the combina-

tion of sulpha with trimethoprim that causes bone marrow toxicity. I searched the Cochrane controlled trials register and found a number of articles that compared trimethoprim with tetracycline for acne. They all compared one drug with another so I ordered a copy from the Philson Library and received the paper by Gibson et al.¹ This reported that oral trimethoprim 100mg tds was as effective as oxytetracycline 250mg tds. Hence I have started my patient on oral trimethoprim 300mg daily and I feel much happier with him being on that than on co-trimoxazole. I will keep you posted on the result.

Clinical bottom line

For patients with acne not responding to oral doxycycline or erythromycin oral trimethoprim 300mg daily may be a suitable alternative. There does not seem to be any long-term safety data on this so caution is required.

	Success	Evidence	Harms
Trimethoprim 300mg daily	At eight weeks as successful as oral oxytetracycline	Cochrane Controlled Trials register	Unknown but potentially safer than co-trimoxazole

NNT = numbers needed to treat for one improvement are not able to be calculated as there were no placebo controlled trials in the literature

References

1. Gibson JR, Darley CR, Harvey SG, Barth J. Oral trimethoprim versus oxytetracycline in the treatment of inflammatory acne vulgaris. *Br J Dermatol* 1982;107:221-4.

All people residing in New Zealand have access to the Cochrane Library via the Ministry website: www.moh.govt.nz/cochranelibrary