

MEDIA RELEASE



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NATURAL ASTHMA REMEDY PROMISING

Researchers investigating the effectiveness of a natural rye extract in preventing asthma say a controlled clinical trial held at The John Hunter Children's Hospital in 1998 shows promising results.

Paediatric respiratory specialist Dr David (Gus) Cooper said trial participants who took the Schumacher Pharmaceuticals formulation, Oralmat, had significantly improved lung function, reported less severe asthma, an improved sense of well-being and an increased ability to exercise at the end of the four-week trial period. No adverse effects were recorded during this trial.

The trial involved 40 patients affected by mild-to-moderate asthma in a randomised, double blind study - ie, neither the patients themselves nor the clinical research staff knew who was taking Oralmat and who was taking a placebo.

The participants took Oralmat or a placebo for four weeks and had lung function tests before treatment, after one week and after one month of treatment. They were also required to complete a questionnaire at each stage of the trial on their attitude towards their asthma, general health and ability to exercise. Blood tests were taken to check for any changes during the trial.

Dr Cooper said the improvements experienced by the patients were modest and variable which could be due to the moderate asthma in the patients. Researchers were continuing to analyse blood samples to assess any biochemical changes.

But the results were promising enough to suggest that additional clinical trials were justified, Dr Cooper said.

"This trial has shown Oralmat to be of benefit in mild-to-moderate asthmatics. Further studies are needed to determine whether this also occurs in more severe asthma and the precise dose which is needed for these positive effects," he said.

Dr Cooper said studies would also need to determine whether the positive effects of Oralmat could be sustained for longer than four weeks (the duration of the first trial) and how the rye extract interacted with other treatments.