

24.10.2005

Dear,

We are writing to you to inform you about our new practice policy relating to the management of acute infective conjunctivitis.

As I'm sure you are aware during the winter months this condition becomes increasingly prevalent, especially amongst school age children and toddlers, and parents frequently present to the GP requesting treatment for their children.

In July 2005 a paper was published in The Lancet journal which was designed to investigate the effectiveness of antibiotic eye drops for acute infective conjunctivitis in children. This was a randomised double-blinded placebo-controlled trial which looked at 326 children presenting to primary care with symptoms of infective conjunctivitis. Its results showed that the use of antibiotic eye drops did not lead to a more rapid clinical cure and that the use of placebo rather than antibiotic drops was not associated with an increased risk of developing complications. This paper confirms that acute infective conjunctivitis is a self-limiting condition which should resolve within seven days regardless of whether or not antibiotics are prescribed.

We are aware that it is the policy of several nurseries and schools in the area to exclude children with this condition until antibiotic treatment is commenced. The current guidance from The Health Protection Agency (HPA) is that exclusion from school is not necessary.

In view of this new evidence and the guidance from the Health Protection Agency, we have instituted a practice policy in an attempt to reduce prescribing and demand for consultation for a harmless and self-limiting condition. Our policy will be to advise and encourage parents to manage this condition conservatively without the use of antibiotic therapy.

We would be grateful if you could support us in this by advising parents as above and reviewing your exclusion policy (if your current policy is to exclude children with this condition). I enclose a copy of our new information leaflet for parents and patients.

Yours faithfully,