

Feasibility study: Clarithromycin for Chronic Rhinosinusitis

Lay summary

The aim of this study was to assess the recruitment and retention of patients into a trial using long-term (12-week course) antibiotics to treat their chronic rhinosinusitis (long-term swelling of the nose and sinuses). Patients were recruited from 6 different hospitals and underwent a range of clinical (eg tests such as examination, scans and smell testing) and questionnaire (to assess both symptoms and quality of life) evaluations prior to commencing the antibiotic and nasal treatment. Patients were re-assessed at the end of the 12-week medication period and sent repeat questionnaires at 6 months also. Feedback regarding the patients involvement in the study was also sought.

Funding was received from the Royal College of Surgeons of England (Pump Priming Grant) with support from the Anthony Long and Bernice Bibby Trusts. Neil Med supplied the sinus irrigation bottles for the study duration.

Fifty-five patients were recruited to the study, 45 patients attended the 3 month visit and 41 the 6 month follow-up questionnaires. One patient was unable to take the medication, 4 patients suffered side effects (3 unable to complete the full course). Unfortunately there were some failings in data collection at some study sites and this study has highlighted some important areas for improvement if the study is to be repeated in the future. Fifty percent of the patients completing the study showed an improvement in their symptomatic scores at the end of the antibiotic course which was sustained at 6 months also.

This study has provided valuable information for an application to the National Institute of Health Research for a full scale trial where some patients will also take a placebo (medication without the active antibiotic) which should give definitive answers as to the correct course of treatment for patients with this disease. Although a small number of patients was included here, the results may suggest that half of the patients stand to benefit from this treatment and potentially avoid sinus surgery.