TREATMENT OF A COMMON OCULAR COMPLAINT

To the Editor: Dr W. Rakusin makes reference to the comparative efficacy of two ophthalmic solutions containing different concentrations of zinc sulphate.

Having experimented quite extensively with eyedrops in animals, I should like to say that unless Dr Rakusin can assure us that the solutions he compared were in all respects identical, except for the differences in the zinc concentrations, his conclusions, as expressed, are not acceptable.

Differences in excipients such as buffers, thickeners, preservatives, stabilizers, etc., can all alter the efficacy. Most marketed eyedrops containing zinc sulphate are formulated with one or more other active ingredients such as naphazoline, tetrahydrozoline, phenylephrine, antazoline, etc. If other active agents were also present in the solutions used, were they the same, and were they present in identical concentrations?

Many 'clinical trials' compare the efficacy of different marketed products that are intended for the treatment of the same condition/s. If this is what Dr Rakusin did, then his comments are of value, but one must know which of the available options he chose to follow before his conclusions can be taken at all seriously.

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Dr W. Rakusin comments: I agree with Or Straughan's comments that buffers and preservatives, etc., alter the efficacy of the drops. The two drops used in the trial were Ocufort, which contains zinc sulphate 0.1%, phenylephrine hydrochloride 0.1%, and tetrahydrozoline 0.4%; and Ocugan, which contains zinc sulphate 0.02%, naphazoline 0.005%, and astringent and decongestant compounds.

The vehicle in each drop was obviously not identical. However, the aims of the trial were (i) to ascertain the effectivity of Ocufort as an astringent and decongestant compared with a known astringent, Ocugan; (ii) to determine the safety of Ocufort and its lack of side-effects; and (iii) to determine patient tolerance of Ocufort.

HEARTFELT THANKS

To the Editor: I wish, through the courtesy of your Journal, to record my appreciation of and gratitude to my colleagues in this town.

Since I have returned to active practice, they have helped me by doing visits on my behalf, as well as performing operations for me.

I am also most grateful to several specialist neurologists, neurosurgeons and urologists who have attended me on various occasions, in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth.

Money could never express the gratitude I owe to all these people.

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SMOKING AND INSURANCE POLICIES

To the Editor: With regard to the correspondence about smoking and life insurance, I should like to ask whether the tobacco companies invest large sums of money with life insurance companies?

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ERRATA

In the book review entitled 'Achalasia of the cardia' by W. Silber, which appeared on page 229 of the SAMJ of 10 February 1979, there was an error in the fifth sentence of the first paragraph, which should have read as follows:

'The term cardiomyopathy should be excluded. It should not be used synonymously with achalasia, which is neither a disease of the cardia nor a spasm.'