Antioxidant in Investigational Green Tea Salve Said to Clear Genital Warts

**BY MICHÈLE G. SULLIVAN**
Mid-Atlantic Bureau

**ST. LOUIS** — An investigation-al ointment containing extract of green tea successfully clears geni- tal warts in about 60% of patients, Karl Beutner, M.D., said at the annual meeting of the American Society for Investigative Dermatology.

The ointment, polyphenon E, is being developed by MediGene AG, Martinsried, Germany. The active ingredient is 80% tea polyphenols. The main catechin in the extract is (+)-epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), which has been shown to induce apoptosis in hu- man carcinoma cell lines.

“It’s a strong antioxidant that inhibits a number of different en- zymes,” said Dr. Beutner, chief medical officer at Dow Pharma- ceutical Sciences, Petaluma, Calif.

Unpublished reports indicate that it induces a pro-Th1 cytokine pro- file not dissimilar to that of im- mune suppression in human carcinoma cell lines.

“The primary end point was clearance of all warts—the baseline warts and any warts that de- veloped during treatment,” Dr. Beutner said. “This is an impor- tant distinction because other tri- als report the response in terms of only clearing the baseline warts. This was a stringent end point. They had to be clear of all warts.”

At the end of the 16-week treat- ment period, about 59% of pa- tients in both active groups had complete clearance of their base- line warts, compared with about 34% of vehicle patients. Complete clearance of all warts occurred in 56% of the group, 50% of the 15% group, and almost 34% of the vehicle group. Average time to re- sponse was 11 weeks.

About 40% of those in both ac- tive groups had more than 50% clearance. Less than 10% in either active group failed to respond.

Women responded better than men, with about 65% of women and 50% of men in both active groups achieving complete clear- ance. Ongoing investigation is looking at whether the ointment is more effective on the moist skin of the vulvar area than on the dry skin of the penis, Dr. Beutner said.

During the 12-week follow-up period, 8.8% of those in the vehi- cle group experienced recurrence of baseline warts, compared with 6.5% of the group receiving the 15% formulation and 8.3% of the group receiving the 10% formulation. No new warts appeared in the vehicle group, however, while new warts did appear in 8% of the group receiving the 10% formulation and in 3.7% of the group rece- iving the 15% formulation.

About 87% of the active patients and 72% of the vehicle patients ex- perienced at least one adverse event; events peaked at 2 weeks and then declined throughout the trial. Most were mild to moderate and included erythema, erosion, exocytosis/flaking, edema, and induration. Only 1% of the pa- tients discontinued use because of an adverse event. About 20% of the vehicle patients also had a mild to moderate local reaction.

The only serious events related to the study drug were two cases of vulvovaginitis, judged to be ap- plication site reactions.

Clinical trials for the ointment have been completed for the gen- ital warts indication, Dr. Beutner said. MediGene AG also is con- ducting a winter phase II trial of the ointment for the treatment of ac- tinic keratosis. Dr. Beutner is a consultant for the company.

Focus on Goal Impediment for Teen Pregnancy Prevention

**BY SHARON WORCESTER**
Tallahassee Bureau

**NEW ORLEANS** — Higher educational and career goals among adolescent girls are widely considered to be pro- tective against pregnancy, but a recent study suggests that this is true only among those who specifically view preg- nancy as an impediment to achieving those goals.

Of 351 racially and ethnically diverse nulliparous teens who completed a question- naire asking about such factors as educational and career goals, anticipated effects of childbearing on these goals, personal desire to avoid preg- nancy and sexual behavior and contraceptive use, 64% had college aspirations, and 58% planned to pursue a career as well as eventual motherhood, Sadie Jumping Eagle, M.D., re- ported in a poster at the an- nual meeting of the North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology. Most (74%) said their goals were achievable, but only 42% said that pregnancy would interfere with their achievement of those goals.

Only those young women who considered pregnancy an obstacle to their goals were significantly more likely to want to remain nonpregnant (77% vs. 27%), had plans to abort if they became preg- nant (27% vs. 4%), and had plans to use contraception consistently in the future (90% vs. 79%), according to Dr. Jumping Eagle of the Uni- versity of Colorado, Denver.

The findings challenge the conventional approach to risk assessment, which assumes “that there are sets of risk and protective factors that differ in quantity between teenagers who do and do not become mothers but [that] exert simi- lar effects on them.” Dr. Jump- ing Eagle noted.

The conventional approach does not take into account the fact that educational and career goals are not necessar- ily causally related to avoid- ing pregnancy, she wrote, concluding that more time within pregnancy prevention intervention programs should be spent not only en- couraging such goals, but also teaching that pregnancy is likely to make the achieve- ment of those goals so diffi- cult that the girls would be “willing to overlook the in- conveniences associated with using contraception.”