

Botulinum Toxin A for the Treatment of Hyperhidrosis

■ Average therapy consists of about 25 injections every six months

BY **CLAIRE SOWERBUTT,**
CORRESPONDENT, THE CHRONICLE

APPROVED FOR THE TREATMENT OF hyperhidrosis in August 2001, Botulinum Toxin A (Btx A) is proving extremely efficacious, yielding a high level of patient satisfaction. "[Btx A] has been used very successfully in the treatment of hyperhidrosis," Dr. Fred Weksberg, director of the Toronto Vein Clinic, and director for the Centre for Cosmetic Dermatology, Toronto, told THE CHRONICLE OF SKIN & ALLERGY. Furthermore, Btx A is safe, with very few side effects. When asked if he would consider it as first line therapy, Dr. Weksberg said, "In terms of non-surgical treatment—before considering surgery, given the fact that patients have tried other easier methods such as antiperspirants, or lotion—[Btx A] is, in my mind, first on the list in terms of treatments, even before oral medications."

In discussing the use of Btx A for hyperhidrosis within his own clinical practice, Dr. Weksberg said the toxin is administered as a series of injections, done at intervals of approximately six months, depending on the individual patient's response. The two areas most commonly treated are the armpits, and

the palms. "It's a very simple procedure, where a series of injections approximately 1.5 cm apart is made in the armpit. The average person would get about 25 injections per side. The dosages will vary, depending on the size of the individual, and their prior response to the material," he explained. "For example, the average dose could be 50 units of [Btx A] per side in the armpit area, and 100 units per side on the palms."

When asked about side effects, Dr. Weksberg responded, "[Btx A] is extremely safe, so side effects are extremely rare. I've never had a patient experience side effects with injections in the armpit or the palm." However, he did point out that although uncommon, some patients could experience slight weakness in the hands for a short period of time. "It's not permanent. It doesn't last that long. For those individuals we usually inject one hand at a time. It may give them slight difficulty in opening jars or doing up buttons. However, this quickly reverses itself and goes back to normal," he explained.

Clinical research is underway to determine the maximum efficiency of the toxin in treating hyperhidrosis, in terms of how best to dilute the toxin, and the optimal number of injections.

"Little technical subtleties like this, which may not seem important to the average person, may be important in terms of achieving the best and the most long-lasting results," said Dr. Weksberg.

Currently, Btx A injections are given approximately every six months, as the treatment is not permanent. However, it may be possible to reduce the frequency of injections, if a patient has been receiving treatment for a number of years. "Sometimes with [Btx A], for example when we treat lines and wrinkles, we can space the treatments farther apart," explained Dr. Weksberg. "If patients have had [Btx A] for three years, you may find at the end of the three years they don't have to be treated as often. The effects of each particular treatment are more lasting."

This raises the question of how Btx A works in the context of hyperhidrosis. "One theory is that it relaxes the muscle that surrounds the duct so that the duct isn't squeezed, and therefore perspira-

Please turn to **Botulinum** page 6 →

