

Case Study: Reishi Mushroom as a Hayfever Remedy

by Dale Pinnock BSc (Hons) MNIMH

A 23 year-old female patient presented to my practice with hayfever that she experiences every year, and has done since the age of eight. She usually begins to become symptomatic considerably early in the year, pollen count depending. This year she began experiencing symptoms towards the end of April. When symptomatic, she presents with stinging watery eyes, an almost totally blocked nose and sinus pain, dry throat, and headaches. When symptoms began, they would be virtually constant until the temperatures dropped, and pollens would decrease. They were not transient like some patients I had seen in the past. The only time there was any temporary relief was following a few days of heavy rain.

She has used both conventional and natural interventions, from antihistamines, and both pharmaceutical and natural anti-inflammatories, to herbal mucous membrane tonics. These remedies offered limited relief, and often only for periods of 20 minutes to three hours maximum. It wasn't unheard of for these remedies to become somewhat inactive after a week or two of use.

This patient's symptoms had started at the age of eight, when she moved to the UK from her home country of Jamaica. The reaction was almost immediate upon arrival (her family moved to the UK in the summer months). Whenever she returns to Jamaica there are no symptoms whatsoever. She believes that as she, in her infant years, and her mother whilst carrying her, had never been exposed to the pollens unique to the British Isles, they were causing too great a challenge for her immune system – an idea that I felt to be greatly plausible. I firmly believe that many allergies arise as a result of our immune systems being overly taxed by an unnaturally high array of challenges, way beyond that which we would have experienced even

20 years ago. Such exposure, in my opinion, can make sensitive individuals develop allergies and reactions that otherwise they would not have developed.

Based upon my past successes with mushroom therapy, and upon the success achieved by practitioners such as Martin Powell, I decided to go for a 'simple' remedy of *Ganoderma lucidum* (Reishi mushroom) for this patient. In herbal medicine, it is common for practitioners to give prescriptions that consist of many remedies blended together. When we give prescriptions of one single herb (which I do as often as I can), we refer to it as a 'simple'.

This prescription was based upon 1000 mg Reishi tablets, taken as a dosage of two tablets three times a day with meals.

Justification of Prescription

It is no new revelation that hayfever is driven by antibodies to specific pollens. These antibodies will drive a series of reactions that lead to mast cell degranulation, and localized release of histamine within the upper respiratory tract, which is responsible for the symptoms commonly experienced by sufferers.

The immune system has two main branches. These are nonspecific, and antibody mediated, or humoral responses. These responses are also known as Th1 and Th2. These fractions refer to the way in which activated T-helper cells respond to specific circumstances, and the types of reactions that they instigate. T-helper cells, when activated, orchestrate certain responses and recruit certain cell types and drive them into action.

Both Th1 and Th2 are mutually inhibitory states – they cannot co-exist. When one becomes active, the other is suppressed. Th1 responses are responsible for our non-specific

immunity, whereas Th2 is responsible for antibody mediated reactions.

Reishi mushroom contains unique polysaccharides which dupes the immune system into shifting into the Th1 state. This will, in turn, greatly reduce all antibody mediated responses, and the symptoms and reactions associated. Reishi polysaccharides do this by interacting with gut lymphatic tissue and setting off what is essentially an alarm response, which leads to systemic immune reactions, eventually priming T-helper cells to move into Th1.

Result of First Follow-Up

It is not often I get hugged on follow-ups, so that came as a rather pleasant shock, which led me to conclude that the patient was rather pleased with the results.

She told me that during the first two days of treatment, her symptoms had become more intense and pronounced, which worried her at first. On day three she awoke, for the first time in six weeks, with the ability to breathe through her nose. She also mentioned that throughout the day her eyes remained comfortable. Towards the end of day three, there was some degree of blockage in her nose, but nothing like the severity she had previously experienced. By the end of her first week of treatment, she was basically asymptomatic.

After a month, when she walked into my practice, she looked very different, and was carrying herself in a happier manner. She was illuminated, mainly by a sense of relief that this source of absolute distraction had been lifted. The symptoms she experienced used to make her somewhat a social recluse during the summer months. She is now enjoying an outdoor social life with her friends, from sitting in pub gardens to playing tennis at a local outdoor court.

I advised her to keep taking the Reishi until mid-autumn and see what happens with a break from medication.

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