



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, U. S. ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY
1585 THIRD STREET
FORT POLK, LOUISIANA 71459-5110

September 15, 2009

Deputy Commander for Clinical Services

Dear Prescriber:

Due to a nationwide shortage of **erythromycin 0.5% ophthalmic ointment (EEO)**, the BJACH P&T Committee has restricted EEO to neonatal prophylaxis use. The FDA is aware of the shortage and is working with pharmaceutical companies to increase the supply of this product. BJACH P&T Committee-approved alternatives to EEO therapy are summarized below:

1. For most conjunctivitis, especially in adults or teens: The typical clinical course is that of red eye, watery discharge with morning sticking, preauricular lymphadenopathy, scratchiness with/without itching that starts in one eye and usually moves to next eye in 1-3 days, and a symptom course that lasts less than four weeks. **TREATMENT:** Preservative-free artificial tears (Refresh) used 4-8 times daily for 1-2 weeks; cool compresses; and once daily Pataday, if needed for itching. If there is corneal or membrane involvement, refer the patient to ophthalmology.

2. For allergic conjunctivitis: Treat the same but use Patanol 3-4 times daily vs. Pataday.

3. For conjunctivitis in an infant under 2 months of age: Refer patient that day to pediatrician or a Family Medicine physician who can consult ophthalmology if necessary.

4. For purulent conjunctivitis: Usually this is not itchy. Culture the pus with a swab. **TREATMENT:** Polytrim 4 times daily for 5-7 days (use Vigamox if sulfa allergic). Refer to ophthalmology if persistent or if any corneal involvement. If purulence is severe and gonococcus is suspected, treat as systemic gonococcus with I.M. ceftriaxone injection plus oral azithromycin (for Chlamydia), then treat eye with Vigamox every 1-2 hours, and refer to ophthalmology.

5. For corneal abrasions: Use Polytrim drops 4 times daily in a non-contact lens-wearer; if organic matter or fingernail is involved in abrasion or if abrasion is in a contact lens-wearer, prescribe Vigamox 4 times daily. Continue drops for 2-5 days, depending on symptoms. If there is any opacity to the cornea, refer to ophthalmology/optometry.

Address questions to Chief, Pharmacy at 531-3233 or Ophthalmology at 531-3276.

Sincerely,

GLYNDA W. LUCAS
Colonel, Medical Corps
BJACH Deputy Commander for Clinical Services