



ELSEVIER

LETTER

The Reply:

I thank Headly for her interest and comments on the subject of antimicrobial therapy to prevent superinfection in viral conjunctivitis. This has raised an important and controversial point on how to treat this red eye condition. I fully agree that antibiotics, in this case administered as eyedrops, should be prescribed judiciously to avoid overuse and the development of widespread antimicrobial resistance. In the presented update on the management of red eye symptoms¹ it was recommended to use antibiotic coverage, because it is sometimes difficult to differentiate the exact cause for conjunctivitis in the clinical practice setting, even for ophthalmologists. Therefore, on the basis of clinical experience, to avoid harming the patient in this acute condition, one might choose to treat with antibiotics to prevent further infective ocular complications. A recently suggested therapeutic

option is the delayed administration of antibiotic eye drops when symptoms persist for more than 3 days.² However, Dr Headly is absolutely right that there is no need of prescribing antibiotic eyedrops in clear cases of viral conjunctivitis.

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doi:10.1016/j.amjmed.2006.10.023

Reference

1. Wirbelauer C. Management of the red eye for the primary care physician. *Am J Med.* 2006;119:302-306.
2. Everitt HA, Little PS, Smith PW. A randomised controlled trial of management strategies for acute infective conjunctivitis in general practice. *BMJ.* 2006;333:321-326.