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Nasal Filter for Hayfever Sufferers Invented

Scientists have invented a nasal filter that offers a totally new approach to managing one of the most common diseases in our community - hayfever. The clear plastic filters sit inside each nostril capturing allergens and preventing them from entering the upper nasal passage whilst allowing the person to breath freely.

Dr Euan Tovey, Head of the Allergy Research Group said, "We were originally working on a nasal device for measuring exposure to allergens but we realised that by modifying it slightly we had a device that could help people with hayfever. The concept of such nasal filters goes back over a hundred years, but the designs we heard about or saw, were too impractical or uncomfortable. Our prototypes overcome these problems"

One in three adults get hayfever and two-thirds don't like taking medications, such as anti-histamines or nasal steroids, because they either don't find them effective or they don't like the side-effects.

Dr Tim O'Meara, Research Fellow, Woolcock Institute of Medical Research, ran clinical trials to test the efficiency of the filter.

"The research suggested that the filters could have a major impact on the reduction of hayfever symptoms. We found that they offered the greatest protection when exposure to allergens was at its highest level which is in contrast to most medications where users may experience break-through symptoms," Dr O'Meara said.

The clinical trials were conducted in Casino, Northern NSW, where subjects wore them while being naturally exposed to airborne ragweed and grass pollens.

The greatest effect of the filter was on nasal symptoms, such as sniffles, itchy nose and runny nose. Some effect was also seen on number of sneezes, watery eyes, itchy eyes, itchy throat and number of nose blows.

"Now that we know the device works we are working on use and aesthetic issues, such as how people want to use it, whether it is disposable or re-useable and making different versions to fit all the different shaped noses," Dr O'Meara said.

"We will also start looking for a partner to help us finance and market it."