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**Advanced Allergy
& Asthma Associates**

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Offices in Elgin, Lake Zurich,
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November/Fall 2012 Newsletter

Dr. Noga Askenazi and staff welcome Dr. Amiinah Kung to our practice

Dr. Kung is a board-certified allergist, trained to treat both children and adults. She has special interests in food allergy, drug allergy, eczema and immunological disorders. Her goal is to help patients understand their medical conditions and to work with them to live their lives to the fullest.

She has had numerous publications including one in the Primary Care Respiratory Journal titled "Characterization of Asthma Status by ICD Code and Criteria-Based Medical Record Review."

In 2007 she received the Mayo International Health Program Scholarship for rotation at Kunming Medical College, Kunming, China.

She attended medical school at Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston, MA. Her residency was completed at the Mayo Clinic School of Medicine. She went on then to complete her fellowship in Allergy & Immunology at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine in Los Angeles, CA.

You can read more about Dr Kung on our website [www. MyAllergyDr.com](http://www.MyAllergyDr.com)

You asked about this: SLIT (Sublingual Immunotherapy)

In response to questions we have been receiving from our medical colleagues and some patients, we want to discuss Sublingual Immunotherapy:

At a recent Illinois Society of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology meeting, we received an update from Dr. Michael Blaiss, a primary investigator in studies regarding sublingual immunotherapy for allergic rhinitis. Sublingual immunotherapy, or SLIT, is the practice of treating allergies by giving patients a tablet or drops containing allergen proteins under the tongue on a daily basis for several years to help them become less symptomatic seasonally. This modality has been in use in parts of Europe, but still has not gained FDA approval in the U.S. Current trials show safety and efficacy in treatment of grass pollen allergy with a tablet (Oralair) that may get approved shortly by the FDA. The major side effects include oral pruritis and throat irritation, though anaphylaxis has been reported with the grass pill (including tongue angioedema), but most often the risk of side effects primarily occur in the first 30 minutes in the early course of treatment. Studies have shown long-lasting effects from these treatments, up to several years after stopping SLIT for particular allergens.

Although this makes SLIT sound ideal, especially for the needle-phobic, there are still some concerns regarding its mainstream use. For one, so far it is only proven to work with one allergen at a time. There is no evidence that mixtures of multiple allergens for treatment is efficacious as some allergens interact with others to decrease any desensitization or immune modulating effects. For multi-sensitized patients, which is the majority of our patients, this is not ideal. Though some specific pollens treated with SLIT show rhinitis improvement, other allergens studied have not yet shown benefit in treating allergic rhinitis. There still are unanswered questions regarding how it should be administered, in terms of optimal dosing, duration, frequency, etc. And although there have been no asthma flares reported, severe asthmatics were excluded from the studies. The safety is unknown in this subset of patients who benefit tremendously from allergen immunotherapy by the subcutaneous route. Subcutaneous immunotherapy (the modern day allergy shots) does not only improve asthma, allergic rhinitis and conjunctivitis, it has been shown to prevent asthma onset as well, by up to 50% and is proven to prevent the development of new allergies. We will need to see over time how SLIT treatment fares in comparison. Another possible use specifically for SLIT is latex desensitization, as by shots is it proving too risky.

There is still much to learn about SLIT, but overall, it does appear to be an exciting new development for the treatment of at least allergic rhinitis. We hope further studies and FDA approval will bring an exciting new option for our patients suffering from allergies, and maybe asthma as well.

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