



# Trehalose & Eye Care



## *A Molecule Poised to Revolutionize Ocular Surface Care*

By Mile Brujic, OD, FAAO

Ocular surface disease and dry eye disease are prevalent and pervasive diseases impacting the eye health of patients. The Dry Eye Workshop II (DEWS II) and other current research offer new insights on the characteristics and pathophysiology of Dry Eye Disease (DED), as well as best practices for treatment and management.

Therapeutic strategies that support the ocular surface, counteract hyperosmolarity and restore the tear film can aid in rehabilitating the eye's structures. This knowledge offers an opportunity to introduce new ways to stabilize the tear film and improve patient comfort through rehydration, reduction of surface inflammation, and protection against future desiccation.

An expanding pool of clinical data is supporting the benefits and sustained efficacy of therapies that include bioprotectants such as trehalose to protect cells against hyperosmolarity and promote exit of the vicious cycle of DED physiopathology.<sup>1</sup>

As such, lubricant eye drops enhanced with trehalose can provide patients with a new, successful way to rehabilitate the tear film in Ocular Surface Disease (OSD) and DED.

### OSD & DED Prevalence & Impact

The 2017 Gallup Study of Dry Eye (conducted by Multi-sponsor Surveys, Inc.) revealed that 56% of adults report experiencing dry eyes frequently (14%) or occasionally (42%).<sup>2</sup> Projected to the U.S. population, this translates to a staggering 140 million dry eye sufferers.<sup>2</sup>

From a pathophysiological standpoint, DED amplifies hyperosmolarity in an unforgiving cycle either directly or by inducing a cascade of inflammatory events, contributing to a loss of epithelial and goblet cells that decreases surface wettability and promotes early tear film breakup.<sup>3</sup>

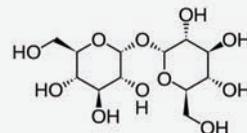
In addition to the physical toll this disease takes on patients, it also has

significant quality-of-life impacts. A number of studies have reported measurable negative effects of DED on daily-living tasks such as reading, carrying out professional tasks and driving.

### Insights on Addressing the Problem

The Tear Film & Ocular Surface Society (TFOS) published the Dry Eye

### What is Trehalose?



**Trehalose**—a bisacetal, non-reducing homodisaccharide in which two glucose units are linked together in a  $\alpha$ -1,1-glycosidic linkage ( $\alpha$ -D-glucopyranosyl- $\alpha$ -D-glucopyranoside; mycose, mushroom sugar)<sup>1</sup>—is found abundantly in nature and in the biological world. The “extraordinary” properties of trehalose are responsible for this molecule’s bioprotective role.<sup>1</sup>

1. Jain NK, Roy I. Effect of trehalose on protein structure. *Protein Sci.* 2009 Jan;18(1):24-36.

## Trehalose – Enhancing as an Excipient

**Excipient**—an inactive substance that serves as the vehicle or medium for a drug or other active substance. It confers a therapeutic enhancement on the active component in the form of, for example, additional absorption, solubility or strength.

Essentially, an excipient serves to enhance the effectiveness of an active ingredient.

Workshop II report, which includes an updated DED definition that keenly accounts for the pivotal role that tear film hyperosmolarity plays, often resulting in ocular surface inflammation. As well, DEWS II, an evidence-based report involving 150 worldwide experts, illuminates the pathophysiology of dry eye and its central mechanism of evaporative water loss leading to hyperosmolar tissue damage.<sup>3</sup>

When it comes to DED treatment, longstanding research advocates the use of lubricating eye drops as a palliative technique for symptom relief and to rehabilitate some of the eye

structures, such as the cornea and conjunctiva, which may have suffered the sequelae of dry eye.

New research shows that recent attempts to counteract tear hyperosmolarity in DED have included bioprotectant features and small organic molecules used in many cell types throughout the natural world to restore cell volume and stabilize protein function.<sup>1</sup> These molecules may directly protect cells against hyperosmolarity and promote exit from the vicious circle of DED physiopathology.<sup>1</sup> There is an expanding pool of clinical data on the efficacy of DED therapies that include trehalose, whose unique properties have shown exceptional osmotic and bioprotectant abilities enabling them to act as a water replacement and prevent against desiccation stress.<sup>1,4,5</sup>

### How Trehalose Works

Trehalose maintains cell protein integrity during drying and rehydration, and it has been shown to protect against oxidative strain and stabilize protein function.<sup>6</sup>

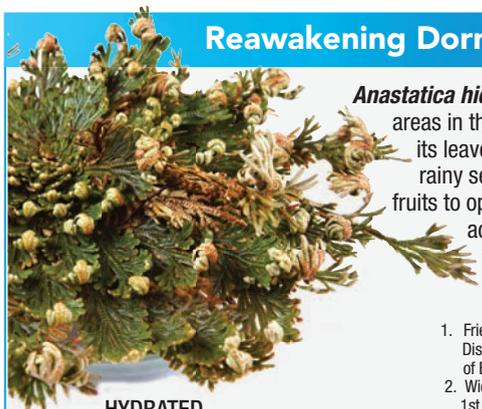
The mechanism by which this member of the polyhydroxyl compound molecules works is by increasing compactness and stability in organisms, thereby aiding in the overcoming of

## Clinical Support for Trehalose

Studies have shown that trehalose offers the following ocular surface benefits:

- Protection of human corneal epithelial cells from desiccation-induced death in culture.<sup>7</sup> One trehalose-containing solution was found to be “effective and safe” for treatment of moderate to severe dry eye syndrome.
- Increased tear film thickness after instillation of one trehalose-containing drop up to 240 minutes compared with drops without trehalose.<sup>8</sup>
- Better patient satisfaction and a therapeutic advancement in treatment of moderate to severe DED when comparing an eyedrop containing hyaluronic acid-trehalose with an HA-only eyedrop.<sup>9</sup>
- Increased tear production at day 14 of treatment in a dry eye mouse model.<sup>10</sup>
- Decreased eye surface apoptosis at day 14 of treatment in a dry eye mouse model.<sup>10</sup>
- Improved appearance of ocular surface epithelial disorders through suppression of apoptosis and serum-like response upon topical application, as well as maintained corneal health.<sup>10</sup>
- Suppressed inflammatory and proteolytic MMP-9 and HSP70 expression and keratinization, and restored ocular surface integrity in mice with dry eye damaged by a desiccative model.<sup>11</sup>

## Reawakening Dormant Desert Life



HYDRATED

*Anastatica hierochuntica* or white mustard flower, commonly called Rose of Jericho, is found in arid areas in the Middle East and the Sahara Desert.<sup>1</sup> After the rainy season, the plant dries up, drops its leaves and curls its branches into a tight ball to hibernate. Once re-wetted in a subsequent rainy season, the ball uncurls and awakens from its dormant state, causing the capsular fruits to open and disperse seeds. The plant’s extraordinary ability to achieve this reawakening activity is attributed to the presence of trehalose, a disaccharide sugar involved in several mechanisms of cryptobiosis.<sup>2</sup>



DEHYDRATED

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 2. Wickens GE. *Ecophysiology of Economic Plants in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands* 1st ed. Berlin, Germany: Springer-Verlag Heidelberg; 1998.

## Trehalose Use in Dry Eye Disease

Trehalose has been shown to:

### 1. Rehydrate Tear Film

- Retain moisture when drying out
- Help increase tear film thickness<sup>8</sup>

### 2. Protect Against Future Irritation

- Help improve corneal staining<sup>7</sup>
- Help protect corneal epithelial cells from apoptosis after desiccation<sup>3,5</sup>

### 3. Support Homeostasis of Tear Film

- Restore osmotic balance to ocular surface<sup>10</sup>
- Help maintain homeostasis of corneal cells<sup>10</sup>

stress conditions such as heat, cold and desiccation.<sup>6</sup> As a result, trehalose has the unique ability to stabilize proteins and the lipid bilayer.<sup>6</sup>

Remarkably, trehalose can also act as a water substitute. Classified as a kosmotrope or water-structure maker, this molecule is involved in various bioprotective actions.<sup>6</sup>

## Future of Treatment

New trehalose-containing solutions are becoming available to help eye care professionals offer patients an alternative treatment and management strategy. As one example, TheraTears<sup>®</sup> is launching a new lubricant eye drop, TheraTears<sup>®</sup> EXTRA Dry Eye Therapy, which contains trehalose as an excipient, serving to enhance the action of the solution's active ingredient, Carboxymethylcellulose (CMC). Doctors

**“The inclusion of the excipient trehalose in TheraTears<sup>®</sup> EXTRA Dry Eye Therapy makes it a natural first-line choice for eye care professionals.”— Mile Brujic, OD, FAAO**

are excited about the potential of lubricant eye drops enhanced with trehalose.

Elevated tear osmolarity, ocular surface stress and desiccation have long been challenges when treating dry eye patients. DEWS II—the most contemporary knowledge base available in the area of DED management—advocates for the use of artificial tears to retain moisture in and stabilize the tear film, as well as defend against desiccating conditions.

We are fortunate that a new lubricant eye drop enhanced with trehalose—TheraTears<sup>®</sup> Extra Dry Eye Therapy—offers the opportunity to enhance moisture retention in ocular surface cells and foster a rich healing environment for tear film rehabilitation. Research shows that the carboxymethylcellulose formula in TheraTears<sup>®</sup> Extra Dry Eye Therapy is effective in reestablishing normal osmolarity levels, and in improving signs and symptoms in dry eye patients.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, trehalose as an excipient gives us a new way to counteract local environment stressors and support a return to equilibrium through its bioprotective and

osmotic properties. This extraordinary disaccharide has the remarkable ability to shield against desiccating factors, protect corneal epithelial cells from apoptosis and rehydrate the tear film.

With TheraTears<sup>®</sup> Extra Dry Eye Therapy, we can potentially advance dry eye treatment while enhancing patient comfort and vision outcomes. The inclusion of the excipient trehalose in this therapy makes it a natural first-line choice for eye care professionals.

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## Trehalose Current and Future Uses

- Major industries: Food, cosmetics, medicine
- An excipient in each of: Herceptin<sup>®</sup>, Avastin<sup>®</sup>, Lucentis<sup>®</sup> and Advate<sup>®</sup>
- Future applications: Solid dosage formulations, most notably in quick-dissolving tablets

new!

thera  
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EXTRA



# HARNESS EXTRA POWER FROM A NATURAL WONDER

NEW TheraTears® Extra Dry Eye Therapy  
is enhanced with trehalose for superior relief

Trehalose is a natural disaccharide found in plants with moisture retention properties that help organisms survive in absence of water. In ophthalmic products, trehalose enhances active ingredients to help:

- Protect corneal cells from desiccation
- Restore osmotic balance to the ocular surface
- Maintain the homeostasis of corneal cells

-2017 DEWS II Report



The Rose  
of Jericho

Learn about our complete line of  
dry eye therapy products at [theratears.com](http://theratears.com)

Reference: 1. Jones L, Downie L, Korb D, et al. TFOS Dews II Management and Therapy Report. The Ocular Surface Jul 2017; 575-628.  
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