

Pharmacy compounding on the skin

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When we think of medication applied to the skin many types of prescriptions come to mind. The most common ones are creams and ointments but there is many more depending on a variety of things including type of skin, the type of result expected and location of the application. These are a few factors that would be involved in the decision to use various topical materials.

Gels, foams, pastes, oils, waters, creams, ointments and powders are all examples of things applied to the skin. To further complicate things compounding pharmacists can (with the doctors' approval) adjust the prescription by including or excluding various medications, preservatives and other chemicals.

Compounding pharmacies don't limit themselves to only the commercial products. Patients may have allergies to some of the chemicals, some manufacturers may be out of stock of some products, some products may be discontinued (some old fashioned products may still be very effective) or something may have to be made specifically for you!

Outside effects vs. inside effects vs. targeted effects

Outside effects are cosmetic type of conditions. Acne, wrinkles, cancer and psoriasis are conditions that are treated. Inside effects are hormone replacement therapy with testosterone or estrogens. Targeted effects are anti-inflammatories for bone or joint pain.

Shingles

Shingles can be treated with medications taken by mouth or applied to the skin. There are very few medications that are commercially available for the skin but an endless assortment can be compounded that can reduce the pain and sensitivity from this disease. Lidocaine (a freezing agent) can be put into a host of topical bases all designed to help to get the medication into the body to reduce the pain from the shingles.

Rubs

Rubs put onto painful joints can be made with more than one type of "pain-killer" in it. Pharmacists have to ensure that the ingredients don't go too deep into the body and bypass the affected joint(s) causing stomach discomfort or ulcer for example.

Compounding topical preparations is a specialized practice requiring knowledge, chemicals, equipment and the desire to make something unique for a patient in need. This is mainly done by pharmacists calling themselves compounding pharmacists.