

Letter to the Editor

Systemic allergic dermatitis syndrome caused by mercury: a reply

Dear Sir,

We thank Pigatto and Guzzi for their interest in our communication (1). We would like to reply to their comments (2, 3).

Firstly, in our report, the features of systemic allergic dermatitis appeared 3 weeks after a short exposure to mercury from a broken thermometer, whereas in Pigatto and colleagues' case, the exposure to mercury was prolonged. Therefore, the exposure scenarios are quite different, therefore the two cases are not comparable.

Second, we hospitalized our patient for monitoring and to stop continued application of povidone-iodine solution, which appeared to have worsened the skin lesions. Exposure to mercury had already stopped.

We initiated a short course of oral corticosteroids because of the extent of skin involvement and the appearance of vesiculobullous lesions. There are several reported cases of mercury-induced systemic allergic dermatitis (baboon syndrome) having been similarly treated (4, 5).

Third, the reference range for normal concentrations of total mercury in blood and urine mentioned by Pigatto et al. (2) are not present in the Brodtkin et al. paper (3). Reference ranges depend on geographical regions and laboratory standards. The values we used were those of the laboratory Pasteur Cerba in Paris (France).

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