

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

Re: *Is mite hypersensitivity sex-linked in children?*

We were interested to read the report of Dr Guy de Montis (*Clinical Allergy*, 1979, **9**, 543) stating that twenty-six of his twenty-seven patients with specific antibody to *Dermatophagoides pteronyssinus* were boys, and speculating that mite hypersensitivity is sex-linked.

We find no association between gender and mite allergy. We did skin prick tests with 1% *Dermatophagoides farinae* extract (Bencard) on 1478 children with respiratory symptoms who were seen consecutively in our allergy clinic. In each child the resulting weal was measured at 20 min and recorded as positive if it had a diameter 2 mm greater than that of the control test. The age range of the children was 1–17 years with a mean of 6 years. Nineteen percent had a positive prick test to mites. Of these, 65% (187) were boys and 35% (ninety-nine) were girls. These proportions are not significantly different from those in the subjects with negative prick tests to mites, 62% (740) boys and 38% (452) girls ($\chi^2=0.94$, $P=0.33$). As there is cross antigenicity between *D. farinae* and *D. pteronyssinus* (Pepys, Chan & Hargreaves, 1968), and as there is normally a good correlation between RAST tests and skin tests (Stenius & Wide, 1969), it is unlikely that differences in either the species of mite or test for mite sensitivity accounted for the difference between our results and those of Dr de Montis.

While it is improbable that mite hypersensitivity is sex-linked it does appear that more boys than girls are likely to present at an allergy clinic with respiratory symptoms. Compared with the distribution of the sexes in the general population there were significantly more boys than girls in our series ($t=10.08$, $P<0.001$). We therefore suspect that a higher prevalence of respiratory-allergy in boys, rather than sex-linked hypersensitivity to mite, was responsible for Dr de Montis' findings.

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References

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STENIUS, B. & WIDE, L. (1969) Reaginic antibody (IgE), skin and provocation test to *Dermatophagoides culinae* and house dust in respiratory allergy. *Lancet*, **ii**, 455.

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