

Letter to the Editor

PVP/hexadecene copolymer: a hard-to-find allergen in modern times

Dear Sir

PVP/hexadecene copolymer (PVP=polyvinylpyrrolidone) appears to be such an obscure and evasive contact allergen, that it remains a novelty each time it is identified. Its latest discovery was published recently (1) and the authors suggested their case to be the first reported. However, in 1995, PVP/hexadecene copolymer was already identified as the allergen in Rainbath Oil, the same or a similar Neutrogena bath product as implicated in the publication in *Contact Dermatitis* (2). Then also, the authors thought they had come up with a new allergen.

In both cases the authors were mistaken. The first publication (if I am not mistaken) of PVP/hexadecene copolymer as a contact allergen dates back to 1988 (3). I realise that this particular reference to the substance would be extremely hard to find; however, it was also mentioned in a recent textbook on adverse reactions to cosmetics (4). In addition, the *Letter to the Editor* that I wrote on this issue (5) could easily be traced by means of an internet search in Medline. I used the PubMed medline query site: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/medline.html>. The entry "hexadecene" gave 19 hits including the article, and with "hexadecene AND allergy" only the article itself was identified. Also "polyvinylpyrrolidone AND hexadecene" and "polyvinylpyrrolidone/hexadecene copolymer" identified the article within seconds.

However, with "PVP" as an entry, the article could not be traced. Possibly, the authors of the *Contact Dermatitis* article used "PVP" as an entry instead of "polyvinylpyrrolidone", assuming that they had done a similar literature search.

Yours sincerely

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