

Correspondence

Evaluation of a multiple food specific IgE antibody test

Sirs, The article by Adler *et al.* [1], reports on various tests for IgE antibody to foods and comes to the rash and unscientific conclusion that the results of multiple antigen testing for foods are misleading. This seems to be based on a discordance between the scores and parental perceptions of food reactions. I should strongly question the value of such a comparison. It is generally agreed that there is no simple diagnostic test for food allergy and that any positive test result must be verified for clinical relevance by a trial elimination diet.

We have presented convincing evidence that the natural occurrence of coexisting IgG and IgE antibodies is common with high exposure antigens (e.g. foods and moulds) [2]. When this occurs, the IgE response tends to be extinguished in RAST or CLA testing. This interference phenomena cannot be overlooked. It could radically change the data presented and thereby casts grave doubts on the validity of the conclusions expressed.

References

- 1 Adler BR, Assadullahi T, Warner JA, Warner JO. Evaluation of a multiple food specific IgE antibody test compared to parental perception, allergy skin tests and RAST. *Clin Exp Allergy* 1991; 21:683-8.
- 2 Marinkovich VA *et al.* Competitive inhibition of IgE antibodies to foods by coexisting IgG antibody. Adverse reactions to foods. VI International Food Allergy Symposium, Boston, November 13, 1987.

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Sirs, Dr Marinkovich questions our recent evaluation of the MAST-CLA food panel which was developed and marketed by his company to use as a diagnostic kit in clinical practice [1,2]. We have previously shown that the MAST-CLA panel of respiratory antigens can provide clinically useful results [3]. However, in the same group of atopic asthmatic children (whose parents were often suspicious of food allergy), the food panel did not discriminate between those with and without food related problems [1].

Dr Marinkovich suggests in his letter that interference between co-existing IgG and IgE antibodies may extinguish the IgE response in RAST or CLA testing. If this is an explanation for some of our findings, it is yet another reason why this type of test system applied to general clinical use could be misleading and is unlikely to improve management.

References

- 1 Adler BR, Assadullahi T, Warner JA, Warner JO. Evaluation of a multiple food specific IgE antibody test compared to parental perception, allergy skin tests and RAST. *Clin Exp Allergy* 1991; 21:683-8.
- 2 Brown RB, Higgins KW, Frazer K, Schoelz LK, Dyminski JW, Marinkovich VA, Miller SP, Burd JF. Simultaneous determination of total IgE and allergen-specific IgE in serum by the MAST Chemiluminescent Assay System. *Clin Chemistry* 1985; 31:1500-5.
- 3 Warner JA, Little S, Warner JO. Comparison of two IgE antibody tests with skin test and clinical history in asthmatic patients. *Paed Allergy Immunol* 1990; 1:34-40.

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