

Non-occupational contact allergy to *Laurus nobilis* (laurel) oil is considered rare. Herein, we report a case of allergic contact dermatitis after a massage with a mixture of olive oil and *L. nobilis* oil. Patch testing showed (++++) reactions to laurel oil and (++) to the mixture of olive oil and laurel oil.

Key words: allergic contact dermatitis; aromatherapy; *Laurus nobilis* (laurel); massage oil

Laurel is widespread in the Mediterranean area, particularly in Turkey, and is used in the flavour and fragrance industry. The leaf essential oil of *L. nobilis* (laurel) has been shown to exhibit analgesic and anti-inflammatory effects comparable with some well-known non-steroid drugs (1). Antibacterial effects have also been shown (2).

Case Report

A 36-year-old non-atopic man presented with a generalized erythematous and oedematous dermatitis being more severe at the back and dorsal aspects of the legs. He had undergone a massage with a mixture of olive oil and *L. nobilis* (laurel) oil, which had been applied to his back, thighs, and dorsal aspect of the limbs, 2 weeks earlier. After 3 days, dermatitis had appeared on skin exposed to massage oils and gradually spread to the rest of the body. He had told that he had once used *L. nobilis* (laurel) oil to his knee, under occlusion, to relieve pain. With the help of clinical findings and a history of exposure, contact dermatitis to massage oil was suspected. A treatment with oral antihistamine and topical steroids was ineffective therefore a short course of oral steroids (40 mg/day) was started. The lesions responded fast to this treatment, and the erythema faded over 2 weeks, leaving postinflammatory pigmentation. 6 weeks later, patch testing was performed with European Standard Series, patient's own products, and with the suspected massage oils: laurel oil, olive oil, and the mixture of olive oil and *L. nobilis* (laurel) oil applied in Finn Chambers[®], Epitest Ltd Oy, Finland. He had (++++) reactions to laurel oil and (++) reactions to the mixture of olive oil and laurel oil on days 2 and 3. No positive reaction was seen to the olive oil itself.

Discussion

Non-occupational contact allergy to *L. nobilis* (laurel) oil is considered rare (3, 4). We have previously reported a case report of allergic contact dermatitis to the laurel in a 55-year-old woman who used it to relieve joint pain (4). Herein, we report another case of allergic contact dermatitis following laurus application. With the current case, this will be the second case report of this kind of complication of the contact reaction from Turkey. Laurel oil is represented as a cause of occupational contact dermatitis defined in aromatherapists (5, 6). Many studies have focused the role of the sesquiterpene lactones in positive patch tests to laurel (7, 8). In a study, the essential oil components of laurel in different locations of Turkey were identified, and minor qualitative and major quantitative variations of some of the compounds were determined with respect to localities of collection (9). We believe that these variations may affect the sensitization capacity of the laurel that grow in Turkey.

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