

and plant series. He had a 2+ positive reaction to 0.1% phenylenediamine base (PPD) in petroleum and a 3+ reaction to 5% benzocaine in petroleum. On close enquiry, he reluctantly admitted to regularly helping his wife colour her hair with a para-phenylenediamine-containing permanent dye, without the protection of gloves. On reflection, he realized that this coincided with exacerbations of his eczema.

Discussion

PPD is the most common active ingredient in hair dyes and has been assessed to be a good screening tool for hair dye sensitivity (1). It is well recognized to cause contact dermatitis in hairdressers and in those who dye their hair; however, it has been reported only rarely as a cause of connubial dermatitis (2, 3). Cross-reaction may occur between PPD and ester local anaesthetics, e.g. benzocaine, as well as para-aminobenzoic acid sunscreens and sulphonamides (4).

Although connubial dermatitis strictly refers to dermatitis initiated by contact with a substance via a spouse, the term has also been used more broadly to describe a dermatitis caused by the household activities of the spouse (5). Connubial dermatitis is most commonly due to fragrances, and in the genital area, due to medicated and spermicidal creams, diaphragm rubber (4, 6) and semen.

This case highlights the importance of a detailed contact history and specific enquiry about substances that may cause connubial dermatitis when confronted with unusual patch test results.

Our patient gratefully received our advice to refrain from helping his wife with her beauty regime. Since avoiding contact with his wife's hair dye, his eczema markedly improved.

PPD: is this a connubial dermatitis?

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Case Report

A 65-year-old man presented to our dermatology department with recurrent episodes of severe hand dermatitis, accompanied by secondary generalisation to his arms, trunk, and face. He is a keen gardener who works as a cleaner and had attributed these episodes to contact with new floor polishes at work. Patch testing was undertaken with the European standard, cream, facial, perfume,

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