

Short Communication

Allergic contact dermatitis due to doxepin cream in a patient with dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa

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Case Report

A 51-year-old man, with localized recessive dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa, was treated with 5% doxepin cream for the itching from it. Within 48 h, he developed facial erythema and eczema at the application sites (wrists and shins). The rash quickly resolved after treatment with topical corticosteroids and withdrawal of doxepin cream.

Patch tests were carried out to doxepin hydrochloride at 0.5% and 1.0% pet. and to the other ingredients of the cream. Because of the fragility of the patient's skin, adhesive tape could not be used. Instead, Finn Chambers[®] were removed from the Scanpor[®] tape and positioned on a sheet of Mepitel[®]. This silicone dressing adheres well enough, but is easily removed from fragile skin without causing blistering. The sheet of Mepitel[®] was applied to the outer upper arm and covered with a length of Tubifast[®], an elasticated viscose stockinette. At D2 and D4, there were positive reactions (+ and ++) to doxepin hydrochloride, at both concentrations, but no reactions to any other ingredient.

Comment

Since becoming available in the UK in July 1998, there has been 1 published report of contact allergy to doxepin, also in a patient with dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa (1). Prior US experience suggests that many more such cases are likely (2). The early onset after application of topical doxepin in our case strongly suggests pre-existing sensitization. In the absence of any documented previous exposure to doxepin or other tricyclic antidepressants, the possibility of primary sensitization by some other drug arises, perhaps in the chemically-similar phenothiazine group of antihistamines.

We confirm that doxepin 0.5% pet. is a suitable preparation for patch testing, and suggest this novel method of patch testing patients unable to tolerate adhesive tape.

References

1. Wakelin S H, Rycroft R J G. Allergic contact dermatitis from doxepin. *Contact Dermatitis* 1999; 40: 214.
2. Taylor S T, Praditsuwan P, Handel D, Kuffner G. Allergic contact dermatitis from doxepin cream. *Arch Dermatol* 1996; 132: 515-518.