

CORRESPONDENCE**Re: Allergy to rodents: an update****I. Folletti and A. Siracusa***Occupational Allergology, Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Perugia, Perugia, Italy*

We wish to comment on the paper published online “Jeal H, Jones M. Allergy to rodents: an update. *Clin Exp Allergy* 2010; 40: 1593–601”.

The recent article of Jeal and Jones is interesting, particularly because it shows very well that allergy to rodents is still an important health problem both in the workplace and in the home despite an increasing knowledge of the disease in the last few decades [1]. However, we believe that in the Summary the sentence “there are few signs that this occupational health problem is declining” is misleading as the evidence for this statement is lacking. On the contrary, in our review, which included 15 cross-sectional studies, there was the suggestion of a progressive decline in the pre-

valence of occupational asthma due laboratory animals, which was estimated as –4.0% from 1977 to 2001 [2]. Of course, the observations of our study are open to discussion and may even be rejected but they should not be disregarded.

References

- 1 Jeal H, Jones M. Allergy to rodents: an update. *Clin Exp Allergy* 2010; 40:1593–601.
- 2 Folletti A, Forcina A, Marabini A *et al.* Have the prevalence and incidence of occupational asthma and rhinitis because of laboratory animals declined in the last 25 years? *Allergy* 2008; 63:834–41.

Response by Meinir Jones and Hayley Jeal**M. Jones and H. Jeal***Imperial College, Dept. Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 1B Manresa Road, Chelsea, London SW36LR, UK*

We wish to thank Drs Folletti and Siracusa for raising concerns regarding conclusions drawn in our review that ‘there are few signs that this occupational health problem (in laboratory animal workers) is declining’.

The review of Folletti *et al.* examined 15 cross-sectional studies, which demonstrated a decline in the prevalence of occupational asthma due to laboratory animals. This decline in occupational asthma due to laboratory animals was estimated as –4.0% from 1977 to 2001. However, this decline was not evident in those studies where workers were exposed to rats, mice, rabbits or guinea pigs.

Furthermore, the review of Folletti *et al.* revealed no statistically significant changes in the prevalence of occupational rhinitis over time. Our review was specifically referring to rodent allergy and thus far we believe there is little evidence to support the view that this occupational health problem is declining. Furthermore, comparisons of cross sectional studies should be viewed cautiously since studies in this field rarely share a common methodology and it is not possible to account for the several biases inherent in cross sectional epidemiology, particularly those that relate to survival pressures.