

Is *p*-phenylenediamine a marker of sulfasalazine allergy?

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Drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS) syndrome is characterized by a rash and systemic reactions, including haematological and solid organ alterations that may be life-threatening. The main culprit drugs are antiepileptics, allopurinol, and sulfonamide drugs such as sulfasalazine (1). Although patch tests with the drug may be useful in some cases,

they are not helpful in the case of sulfasalazine, as they are known to always give negative results. Recently, it has been suggested that *p*-phenylenediamine (PPD) could be used as a marker of allergy to sulfasalazine (2). We report a case of DRESS syndrome induced by this substance, complicated by sensitization to textile dyes with positive patch test reactions to the latter and to PPD.

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Case Report

A 30-year-old man was hospitalized for a pruritic extensive rash with oedema of the face and fever (39.5°C). He was suffering from ankylosing spondylitis, and skin

Three months later, the patient developed erythematous, scaling patchy eczema on the trunk and limbs. Patch testing was performed on healthy skin of the back, by the use of Finn Chambers® on Scanpor® tape, with the European baseline series and a textile dyes series (Chemotechnique Diagnostics, Vellinge, Sweden). Patches were removed after 2 days, and reactions were evaluated on day (D) 2 and D3 according to ICDRG criteria. The results showed sensitization to PPD (++/+++) and to the following dyes: Disperse Orange 3 (++/+++), Disperse Red 1 and 17 (++/++), *p*-aminoazobenzene (++/+++), and 4-aminophenol (++/+++). Our patient had never been exposed to hair dyes or black henna tattoos, and used to tolerate coloured clothes perfectly well. With the use of only 100% cotton and white underwear, regression of lesions was achieved.

Our case suggests that patch testing with PPD in patients with DRESS syndrome caused by sulfasalazine is helpful. Moreover, the question arises of whether testing with PPD prior to initiation of sulfasalazine treatment is useful.