

Letter to the editor

Answer to the letter of Brockow et al. concerning our article 'Safety of rush insect venom immunotherapy. Results of a retrospective study in 178 patients'

Dear Sirs,

We welcome the remarks of Brockow et al. regarding the occurrence of adverse reactions in rush insect venom immunotherapy (VIT) and are pleased to have initiated a discussion on this important topic. They refer to their own study from 1997 dealing with the efficacy of antihistamine treatment in the prevention of adverse reactions to hymenopteran immunotherapy (1). Importantly, the authors point out that the consequent administration of antihistamines leads to a decrease of side-effects. However, their and our own study (2) are difficult to compare. There are substantial

differences in: (i) the size of the patient groups, (ii) in the inclusion criteria, (iii) in the scoring system for adverse reactions and (iv) the different proportion of immunotherapies to honey bee allergy (9.9% compared with 14.6%), which are associated with a higher number of adverse reactions, when compared with wasp allergy (3). In our study, antihistamines were given only therapeutically and not for prophylactic purposes. Last but not the least, the study of Brockow et al. had a prospective design, while we presented a retrospective analysis only.

We agree with Brockow et al. that prophylactic application of antihistamines in VIT can have beneficial effects and reduce adverse reactions. Indeed, we now practice an application of antihistamines routinely, starting at the fourth day of VIT, following earlier studies (1, 4) and our own experience. However, continuous re-evaluation of efficacy and safety, preferably based on uniform standards, will be important in the future.

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References

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