

Short Communication

Hypersensitivity reactions to latex in patients having topical treatment applied by health professionals wearing latex gloves

ASAD SALIM AND ANDREW P. WARIN

Department of Dermatology, Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, Barrack Road, Exeter EX1 2ED, UK

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Latex allergy is a Type 1 reaction, causing contact urticaria and even anaphylaxis (1), which is currently a particular problem among health care and dental professionals (2). Their patients may also experience such reactions, one source being the wearing of latex gloves by nurses applying medicaments.

In one of our cases, she developed acute urticaria and itching after being treated at the hospital, though never at home where she applied the same treatment herself. She had a positive RAST to latex. She also became wheezy when blowing up rubber balloons. Patch tests to all her topical medicaments were negative.

Case Reports

Case no. 1

A 41-year-old woman with endogenous eczema was admitted to hospital with a recent exacerbation. She was started on oral prednisolone and antihistamines, and topical corticosteroids and emollients. She suffered an anaphylactic reaction after application of her topical treatment, consisting of stridor, facial oedema and severe pruritus. Her RAST to latex was strongly positive. She gave a previous history of swelling and itching around her mouth following dental treatments. She was patch tested to all her topical medicaments with negative results.

Case no 2

A 40-year-old woman had a long history of severe endogenous eczema and had had multiple hospital admissions. She had also frequently had treatments applied as a day patient in hospital. On a number of such oc-

Discussion

These 2 cases illustrate the current problems associated with latex allergy. With the increasing use of latex gloves, and consequently more patients exposed, all clinicians should be aware of the diagnosis and its potentially serious consequences. A history of latex allergy should routinely be sought. Educating all health professionals is also essential (3).

References

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