

# CORRESPONDENCE

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## Mites and house dust

To the Editor:

The question of mites as the source of a major allergen in house dust has recently received much attention in both medical literature and in the lay press. Although this arthropod has for some time been reported to be present in large numbers in the crude house dust, its allergenic importance has gained much interest among American Allergists since the report of Voorhorst and associates (J. ALLERGY 39: 325, 1967).

In a study which I have previously reported in *Acta Allergologica* (21: 241, 1965), a clinical attempt was made to relate the whole phylum Arthropoda, including mites, to allergens in house dust obtained from many areas of the United States and Japan. These studies were unable to provide any significant allergenic identity between house dust and entomological material.

The immunologic studies of Miyamoto and associates (J. ALLERGY 42: 14, 1968) would strongly support the clinical findings of Voorhorst. But without belaboring some of their observations, I should like to see further substantiation of these interesting findings and conclusions.

In recent months we have been routinely testing patients with inhalant allergy with house dust extract and the mite *Dermatophagoides farinaecarinae*, as well as the mite *Tyrophagus putrescentiae* (a ubiquitous grain mite which we could raise in large quantities). The extract of this latter mite gave much stronger skin-test reactions than the *Dermatophagoides* mite. This perhaps could be attributed to differences in concentration of the inherent allergen.

Although on some patients house dust and mite extracts gave equally strong wheal reactions, on a more significant number of patients one allergen would produce a large wheal and flare while skin tests with the other would be entirely negative. In the meantime we are continuing with immunological studies on these crude allergens.

For the present I feel that some restraint should be used in attributing to mites the major allergenic determinant of house dust. Undoubtedly mites are a significant contaminant in crude material used in preparing house dust extract, and, as this material is stored for long periods of time before being extracted, contamination with this arthropod as well as with other arthropods (especially carpet beetles and moths) becomes allergenically more significant.

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