

relied historically, or continue to rely on medicinal plants for medical care. As alternative herbal remedies are becoming more widely used there is an increase in phytocontact dermatitis. Here we document two patients who developed contact dermatitis due to *Allivum sativum*, and *Ranunculus illyricus* after applying to the skin in order to relieve the rheumatological joint pain.

Key words: *Allivum sativum*; contact dermatitis; *Ranunculus illyricus*.

Case 1

A 47-year-old man presented with ruptured bullae in a crusted, haemorrhagic, erosive and scaling lesion extending from the upper part of right knee to the proximal part of the lower leg (Fig. 1). He had applied garlic under occlusion for about 12 hr on his right knee 3 days before presentation, and the lesions appeared 2 days after he had removed the occlusive cloth. He mentioned that he had used garlic for the first time to relieve the joint pain. As the patient did not accept, we could not perform a patch test. Cultures obtained from the erosive parts of the lesion were negative. Treatment was started with topical wet dressings, topical antibiotics, and systemic antihistamines. His lesions began to recover in 4–5 days, and resolved completely within 10 days.

Case 2

A 55-year-old woman was admitted to our outpatient clinic with erythematous and bullous lesions; some of them ruptured (Fig. 2). She reported that, for the first time, she had applied 'yellow weed' to her knee for the relief of joint pain 2 days previously, and after 1 day of application a large fluid-filled wound appeared. A punch biopsy had been taken to rule out vasculitis and reported as spongiotic dermatitis consistent with contact dermatitis. Taxonomic investigation of the weed showed *Ranunculus illyricus*, ssp. *illyricus*. Patch testing with the European Standard series was negative. The fluid culture was negative. Wet dressings, topical antibiotics, and oral antihistamines were started, and the lesions resolved within 3–4 days.

Contact dermatitis due to *Allivum sativum* and *Ranunculus illyricus*: two cases

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Plants are of relevance to dermatology for both their adverse and beneficial effects on skin and skin disorders respectively. Virtually all cultures worldwide have

Discussion

Many modern drugs owe their origin to plant-based complementary medicine,



Fig. 1. Ruptured bullae in a crusted, haemorrhagic, erosive and scaling lesion extending from the upper part of right knee to the proximal part of the lower leg.



Fig. 2. Ulcerating bullous lesions on the knee.

and there has been an upsurge of interest in the potential use of medicinal plants for the treatment of a wide range of disorders (1). In Turkey, it is well known that many alternative herbal remedies are used for different indications, especially for rheumatological joint pain.

The adverse effects of plants on skin are typically manifest via 3 main mechanisms: irritant, photo-toxic, and hypersensitivity reactions (1, 2).

Garlic is a part of the Alliaceae family and is a well-recognized cause of allergic contact dermatitis but may also produce an irritant rash, as well as urticaria or a protein contact dermatitis (3, 4). The species are widely distributed throughout the temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere, although the plant probably developed in Central Asia. It is known that severe reactions can arise

from fresh garlic under occlusion (3) as seen in our first patient.

Many people use members of the *Ranunculaceae* family as traditional treatments. *R. illyricus* is a member of this family. The species grow in rocky slopes. Although the species are distributed throughout Turkey, it develops especially in the Eastern region (5). The lactone ranunculin is widespread in the *Ranunculaceae*, and when fresh plants are bruised, ranunculin is converted to the irritant protoanemonin (6), which probably caused the reaction in case 2. Both of our patients denied previous exposure and there were only one or few days between exposure and onset of symptoms. We proposed that our cases had 'non-allergic irritant contact dermatitis'.

Although there are beneficial effects of plant extracts on skin and skin disorders, they have many adverse effects too. The cases reported from different

parts of Turkey (6, 7) make us consider that plants are frequently used at least for rheumatological joint pain in the Turkish population.

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