
Correspondence

STACHYBOTRYS-RELATED ALLERGY

To the Editor:

The recent special article by Chapman et al¹ on so-called toxic mold is both informative and timely. The section on controversial diseases attributed to molds reviews the role of the genus *Stachybotrys*. Although some health concerns and litigation involving this indoor mold may involve respiratory complaints, this section of the paper contains only a brief paragraph on allergy. The case of an asthmatic 4-year-old exposed to indoor *Stachybotrys* who improved with avoidance is cited. The authors state that "no allergy testing was reported." In this case 3, Kozak et al² reported positive cultures for *Stachybotrys* and a positive prick reaction to a special extract of the *Stachybotrys*. More recently, specific IgE to *Stachybotrys* by radioallergosorbent assay testing has been detected in blood bank sera.³ IgE to *Stachybotrys* detected by basophile histamine release was reported in some school employees with long-term exposures to damp buildings, although no association was found in those reporting asthma or hay fever.⁴ We have found a prevalence of *Stachybotrys* IgE sensitization by skin test in 5% of atopic patients presenting to our practice with extrinsic asthma and allergic rhinitis (in press).

In a murine model of IgE-mediated asthma, responses typical of allergic asthma have been demonstrated after bronchial inhalation of *Stachybotrys* proteins.⁵ *Stachybotrys* is difficult to culture from air samples. That humans are capable of developing IgE responses to *Stachybotrys* suggests, how-

ever, that some atopic patients are sensitized to this indoor mold most likely by the inhalational route. As Chapman et al suggest, allergists and immunologists need to be familiar with the current science of mold-related illnesses. Further studies will be required to prove that *Stachybotrys* is responsible for causing allergic respiratory disease. Until those studies are available, health concerns attributable to possible *Stachybotrys*-related allergy may persist.

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