Occupational dermatitis: what’s new?

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Skin & Cancer Foundation Inc, Carlton, Vic
Occupational Dermatology Clinic

- Started 1993 at Monash Medical Centre, 4000 pts
- Transferred to Skin and Cancer Foundation (SCF) in 2001 which is a tertiary referral dermatology outpatient centre
- SCF started 1987 by most of the dermatologists in Melbourne who donated $1000 each
- SCF is a private facility: patients are billed, doctors initially donated their time
- Approx 30 sub-specialty clinics - skin cancer, Moh’s surgery, transplant dermatology, nails, hair, psoriasis, contact/occupational dermatitis
Outline

- Assessment of occupational dermatitis
- Patch testing
- Making a diagnosis
- Australian Baseline Series
- Latex allergy in 2018
- An important allergen- methylisothiazolinone
- Addressing occupational dermatitis in healthcare workers- alcohol-based hand rubs are good!
Making a diagnosis of contact dermatitis

• History-condition, occupation, hobbies, home
• Exposure assessment
• Clinical examination
• Patch testing
• Blood tests: RASTs especially for latex; total IgE as an indicator of atopy
• Prick testing, especially for foods contacted by chefs
• Other-skin biopsy, fungal scrapings etc
Why assess exposure?

• To decide which allergens might have caused the dermatitis and what to patch test with

• To decide how to dilute substances from work or home for patch testing

• To decide if patch test reactions are relevant
We diagnose allergic contact dermatitis on the basis of:

1. Clinical history and rash compatible with allergic contact dermatitis
2. Positive patch test
3. History of allergen exposure
How to assess exposure?
There are a number of ways

- History given by patient, doctor or workplace
- Information regarding substances contacting the skin eg product labels
- Material safety data sheets (SDS)
- Information from websites
- Chemical analyses- Malmo
- Occupational hygienist-Toronto
- Workplace visits
- Photos of workplace-now taken with patient’s phone!
Exposure assessment: Safety data sheets
Skin examination: Need to make a skin diagnosis!

There are many causes of rashes on hands besides contact dermatitis

- Tinea or fungal infection
- Secondary bacterial infection
- Endogenous hand eczema (pompholyx), atopic eczema, hyperkeratotic hand eczema, discoid eczema
- Psoriasis
- Id or autoeczematisation reaction
- Porphyria cutanea tarda
Porphyria cutanea tarda
Irritant contact dermatitis (ICD)

Skin barrier damage resulting from

- Water and wet work
- Soaps and detergents
- Heat and sweating
- Dusts and fibres
- Solvents and thinners
- Oils
- Friction

Different occupational groups will have different exposures to irritants, specific to their job or work processes.
Allergic contact dermatitis (ACD)

- Allergic contact dermatitis is caused by a 
  delayed hypersensitivity reaction to a sensitising 
  substance touching the skin
- Occurs after exposure to the allergen/chemical, with the 
  initial sensitization process taking 10 days to 3 weeks
- The rash appears 6 to 24 hours after contact and lasts for 
  several days
- It may be difficult to determine the cause or to identify 
  the offending substance or chemical from the history
- People may become sensitized years after the first 
  exposure
Patch testing for delayed hypersensitivity
Tests are applied for 48 hours and then removed
Read reactions according to international guidelines
There have been reports of allergic contact dermatitis to 4900 chemicals from a total of approx. 100,000 chemicals.

We have around 400 chemicals for testing.
Patch test clinic-
Test our allergens and own substances from work and home, often need dilution
Do not test with known irritants
Patch testing

1. Australian Baseline Series: our group has reported 60 most frequent and important allergens in Australian population

2. Additional series based on exposures eg hairdressing, cosmetics, nurses, rubber chemicals, epoxy resins, acrylates etc

Make an accurate diagnosis!

- In order to help our patients as much as possible, we need to make an accurate diagnosis of all the factors contributing to our patients’ skin conditions
- There may be multiple factors
- Combination of subjective and objective assessment
Understanding your skin condition

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www.skincancer.asn.au
Email: admin@occderm.asn.au

Is it related to your work?
- [ ] Significantly work-related
- [ ] Partially work-related
- [ ] Not work-related

Rash

From inside your body

Eczema

Psoriasis

Contact dermatitis

From contact with agents on the outside of the skin

Irritant contact dermatitis

Aggravating factors in skin conditions
Water  Soap  Heat  Sweating  Friction  Other:
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]

Allergic contact dermatitis (delayed)
Diagnosed by patch testing

Contact urticaria (immediate)
Diagnosed by blood test &/or prick tests

Reacted to and now need to avoid:
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]

Diagnosis (in order of importance to your condition):
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

Occupational Dermatology
Research and Education Centre

Skin & Cancer
Foundation Victoria
Attempt to list all diagnoses contributing to occupational dermatitis (n= 1590)

- Patients with 1 diagnosis 820 (51.5%)
- Patients with 2 diagnoses 560 (35.2%)
- Patients with 3 diagnoses 181 (11.4%)
- Patients with 4 diagnoses 29 (1.9%)
Work relationship

Occupational dermatology clinic

- Significantly work-related: 62%
- Partially work-related: 19%
- Not work-related: 19%
Immediate hypersensitivity reactions

- Cause asthma, hay fever, food allergies and contact urticaria
- Usually investigated in Australia by allergists with prick testing
- Whereas people with skin rashes (eczema, contact dermatitis, psoriasis) are appropriately referred to dermatologists
- Contact urticaria presents with immediate burning, redness which usually resolves quickly
Immediate hypersensitivity reactions

• Contact urticaria commonly caused by natural rubber latex, foods, ammonium persulphate (hairdressing bleach)
• Less commonly, inhalant allergens- house dust mite, animals, malassezia furfur, chlorhexidine
• Repeated episodes may cause protein contact dermatitis
• Tested for specific IgE (RAST) or prick testing, NOT tested by patch testing
Risk factors for latex allergy

• Exposure – lower levels of latex protein these days
• Atopy - a personal or family history of asthma, eczema or hay fever (even eczema occurring as a baby with no skin problems since)
• Damaged skin barrier, such as with contact dermatitis, has been shown to facilitate sensitisation to latex
• Glove powder, which aerosolizes latex protein
Latex allergy forgotten but not completely gone

- Peak was in 2001: 19 cases; 2017: 4 cases
- Most recent cases of latex allergy involved workers wearing powdered disposable latex gloves inappropriately
- Occupations involved were hairdresser, bicycle mechanic, concreter, laboratory worker
- Highest rates of latex protein in products like balloons, causing problems in shopping centres
- In our clinic, 27% of people with latex allergy presented with a facial rash, 4.3% generalized rash
Healthcare workers –should use nitrile gloves (synthetic rubber) if latex allergy or first responders
Cases from the clinic coalface

Our cases represent

• Failure of workplace education: exposure to known allergens which should be preventable (awareness, engineering controls, personal protective equipment)

• Inappropriate exposures from inadequate personal protective equipment

• Exposure to hard-to-avoid allergens, especially in gloves and skincare products

• Where the problem is

“to determine the aetiology of the occupational skin disease and to make recommendations for its prevention”
42 year old male floor coating applicator

- Rash on hands for 6 months
- Work duties-mixed epoxy resin and hardeners in bucket
- Stirred with drill
- Trowelled onto surfaces, smoothed with rake
- Wore rubber gloves ‘sometimes’
Diagnosis: allergic contact dermatitis to epoxy resin

- Positive patch test to epoxy resin and diluted sample of own resin
Allergic contact dermatitis to epoxy resin

- Rubber gloves do not provide appropriate skin protection from epoxies
- Reusable thick nitrile gloves or multi-laminated barrier gloves have been found to be suitable
- Concurrent solvent use can affect glove function
- It is often falsely assumed that all gloves protect from all chemicals
Gloves need to be adequate for the job!

• Charts indicating glove permeation data for specific chemicals
  • www.bestglove.com
  • www.ansellchemsafe.com
• Appropriate length- wrists protected
• Appropriate material
54-year-old male paediatric nurse

- Two-year history pruritic dermatitis: dorsal hands, neck, eyelids
- Skin improved when away from work
- Previous treatment: oral and topical steroids
Exposures

Workplace

• Emergency Department 12 years
• Microshield handwash, had previously used Microshield 4 (contained chlorhexidine)
• Skinman (waterless hand cleaner), previously Debug
• Latex and nitrile gloves

Home

• QV wash (soap substitute)
• Home handyman
• Motorbike
Investigations

• Patch testing: Australian Baseline Series, rubber series, nurses’ series, Microshield product series, own contactants

• Specific IgE blood test (RAST) for latex – negative
Patch test reactions

- +++ thiuram mix, plus reactions to several other thiurams (rubber accelerators)
- ++ carba mix, plus reactions to several other carbamates (rubber accelerators)
- + methylisothiazolinone (MI), 1+ methylchloroisothiazolinone (MCI)/MI
- + own face cream (contained MI)
- + own nitrile glove (known to contain carbamates)
Diagnoses

1. Allergic contact dermatitis (ACD) to rubber accelerators relevant to use of gloves at work
2. ACD to MI and MCI contained in his face cream, shampoo and also liquid hand wash used at home
3. Irritant contact dermatitis – wet work

Higgins C and Nixon R Facial contact dermatitis without hand involvement caused by disposable latex gloves Contact Dermatitis 2016; 74: 251-3
Management

- Accelerator-free gloves: Ansell Microtouch Nitrafree (disposable), Ansell Gammex Dermaprene or Sensoprene (sterile)
- Products free of MI and MCI (home use)
- Soap free wash, moisturising cream, topical corticosteroid ointment
- Minimise irritant exposure
- Workers’ compensation claim: time off work for skin to heal
Comment

- ACD to hard-to-avoid allergen (rubber accelerators)
- Long history of wet work causing skin barrier damage may have facilitated sensitisation
- This case also exemplifies that sometimes contact dermatitis is caused by a combination of work and non-work factors (face cream, shampoo and liquid soap)
49 year old concrete worker allergic to chromate, allergen in cement
Chromate

- Exposure in wet cement
- Also used to tan leather
- In Europe, ferrous sulphate is routinely added to cement to reduce oxidation state rendering it non-allergenic
- No such legislation in Australia, USA
- 25 + cases per year in Australia?
- May be associated with persistent post-occupational dermatitis
44 yr old carpenter with fingertip dermatitis on non-dominant hand who thought he was allergic to his nails

- Patch testing revealed diallyl disulphide ++ (allergen in garlic)
- He cut up garlic every night when cooking for his family
Most important allergens in occupational allergic dermatitis affecting the hands (2800 cases 1993-2010)

- P-phenylenediamine (hair dye)
- Ammonium persulphate (hairdressing bleach)
- Thiurams (rubber accelerators)
- Chromate (cement, leather)
- Epoxy resin

Relevant allergens in occupational hand dermatitis-Occupational Derm Clinic 1993-2013
Incidence rates of occupational skin disease per 100,000 person years

- Hair and beauty 70
- Machine and plant operators 38
- Healthcare workers 21
- Automotive workers 18
- Science workers 18

New epidemic of contact allergy!

- Worldwide epidemic of allergy of the preservative methylisothiazolinone (MI) in baby wipes, skin cleansers, sorbolene lotions, shampoos, deodorants, facial wipes, paints
- Inappropriately high concentration of MI having been allowed from 2005 to 2017
- Mainly non-occupational especially carers of babies, but also in some hand cleaners, paints
How did the epidemic of MI sensitisation occur?

According to Dr Ian White, UK, ESCD 2014:

• Failure of industry of submit ALL information regarding sensitization at the time of evaluation
• Systematic error found in local lymph node assay data
• There is NO safe limit in leave-on cosmetics
• It should be restricted to 15ppm in rinse-off products
• “That men do not learn the lessons of history is the most important lesson of history” Aldous Huxley
Process worker allergic to methylisothiazolinone in a hand cleaner
Allergic contact dermatitis to MI in a facial wipe
MI containing products, especially shampoos
MI containing products

Parsley Seed Anti-Oxidant Facial Toner

An anti-oxidant rich toner for all skin types, including dry and sensitive.

How to Use

Ingredients

This ingredient list is subject to change, customers should refer to the product packaging for the most up-to-date ingredient list.

Amazing Face Cleanser

A non-drying daily cleanser enhanced with purifying Mandarin Rind to effectively cleanse the skin without disturbing its natural balance.

Suited to
Oily, combination and open-pored skin, for those in warm and humid climates

Skin feel
Refreshed, balanced and scrupulously clean
## SCF Patch test clinic data

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>No patch tested</th>
<th>Positive reactions</th>
<th>Percentage of those tested %</th>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>452</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>79</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>18.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Flury U, Palmer A, Nixon R The methylisothiazolinone allergy in Australia Contact Dermatitis 2018
Understanding your skin condition

Rash

From inside your body

From contact with agents on the outside of the skin

Eczema

Psoriasis

Contact dermatitis

Irritant contact dermatitis

Aggravating factors in skin conditions
Water  Soap  Heat  Sweating  Friction  Other:

Allergic contact dermatitis (delayed)
Diagnosed by patch testing

Contact urticaria (immediate)
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Reacted to and now need to avoid:

Diagnosis (in order of importance to your condition):
1.
2.
3.
4.
Management of occupational dermatitis

• MAKE A DIAGNOSIS: avoidance of allergens and irritants
• Appropriate gloves for each activity; cotton gloves for housework
• SKIN CARE:
  • (i) Soap substitutes (pH balanced), avoid bar soaps which are alkaline
  • (ii) Moisturising lotions, creams and ointments
  • (iii) Topical steroid ointments to areas of dermatitis
• Physical therapies- Grenz ray, UV to hands
• Systemic therapies-oral corticosteroids and steroid-sparing agents
Impact of occupational skin disease (OSD)

LARGEST INDUSTRY GROUP
Healthcare and social assistance

PREVENTION IS A PRIORITY

Quality of life
Ability to work
Direct costs

Public health & infection control
Indirect costs
Healthcare workers (HCWs) – a high risk group for occupational skin disease

Lots of exposure to irritants and allergens
- Hand hygiene requirements
- PPE – gloves, sweating
- Cleaning/disinfectants, washing
- Tools of the trade (eg acrylates – dentists)

Prevalence 17-50% worldwide, with rates of up to 65% in ICU/NICU
Original Article


Claire L. Higgins, Amanda M. Palmer, Jennifer L. Cahill, Rosemary L. Nixon

First published: 20 July 2016  Full publication history
DOI: 10.1111/cod.12616  View/save citation
### Major occupational allergens (237 ACD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALLERGEN</th>
<th>Relevant reactions</th>
<th>Total tested</th>
<th>Proportion of total tested</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thiuram mix</td>
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<td>537</td>
<td>9.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tetraethylthiuram disulfide</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>502</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formaldehyde</td>
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<td>534</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coconut diethanolamide</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>5.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dipentamethylene thiuram disulfide</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowicil™ 200 (quaternium 15)</td>
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<td>534</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tetramethylthiuram monosulfide</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tetramethylthiuram disulfide</td>
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<td>Methylchloroisothiazolinone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fragrance mix</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chlorhexidine diacetate</td>
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<td>496</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chlorhexidine digluconate</td>
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<td><strong>Methylisothiazolinone</strong></td>
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<td><strong>101</strong></td>
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<td>Lanolin alcohol</td>
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<td>Germall 115 (imidazolidinylurea)</td>
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<td>Glutaraldehyde</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zinc diethyldithiocarbamate</td>
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<td>DMDM Hydantoin</td>
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<td>Methyl methacrylate</td>
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<td>Myroxolon pereriae</td>
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<td>Carba mix</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5 hand cleansers among the top 30 causes of ACD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Relevant Reactions</th>
<th>Total Tested</th>
<th>Proportion of Total Tested</th>
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<tr>
<td>Microshield® Handwash Mild Neutral Formula pH7</td>
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<td>191</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Microshield® 4 Chlorhexidine Skin Cleanser</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>173</td>
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<tr>
<td>Microshield® 2 Chlorhexidine Skin Cleanser</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecolab® Glad Hands Concentrated Lotion Skin Cleanser</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Microshield® Skincare Cleanser pH5.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>76</td>
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</table>

NB Microshield most common brand of cleanser used in Australian hospitals
Hand cleansers vs alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHRs)

- ACD caused by hand cleansers 8 x rate from ABHRs (12.4 % vs 1.6 %)
- Hand cleansers major cause of ICD
- Hand cleansers often being used when ABHRs indicated
- ABHRs sting on broken skin – often misinterpreted as “allergy”

Conclusions

• ABHRs caused substantially less ACD and less ICD than commercial hand cleansers
• Stinging ≠ allergy!
• Appreciable number of reactions to so called “hard-to-avoid” weak allergens present in commercial hand cleaners
• Rubber glove chemicals still an issue
• Latex allergy trending down
• High rates of occupational ACD to MI

OSD presents a significant burden of disease in Australian HCWs
SO WHAT CAN WE DO ??
Individual level

Primary prevention
- EDUCATION
  - Early management of symptoms

Secondary prevention
  - Allergen avoidance and substitution
  - Accelerator-free gloves

Manufacturer level

- Mandatory labelling
- Allergen substitution – responding to the evidence
- Accurate MSDS

Management level and beyond

- Promoting ABHRs instead of hand cleansers where indicated
- Integrating skin care education with hand hygiene training
- Overarching national guidelines
- National OSD

Skin care education and individual counselling versus treatment as usual in healthcare workers with hand eczema: randomised clinical trial.

Safework Australia supported the development of skin care within the hand hygiene module

Integrating skin care education with hand hygiene training....

Healthcare workers - Occupational Dermatitis and Skin Care
Skin Care

This section of the module has been created by The Occupational Dermatology Research & Education Centre, Skin & Cancer Foundation Inc. Funded by Safe Work Australia.

Occupational contact dermatitis is an inflammatory skin condition which occurs when workplace substances damage the skin. Usually the hands of healthcare workers are affected, although other exposed skin may be involved, such as the arms, face and neck.

There are 3 main types of contact dermatitis: irritant contact dermatitis (ICD), allergic contact dermatitis (ACD) and contact urticaria.

Signs and symptoms of contact dermatitis include:

- Dryness (involvement of the web spaces between the fingers is often the first sign)
- Redness
- Itchiness
- Soreness
- Scaling and flaking
- Splitting and cracking
- Blistering
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• An important allergen- methylisothiazolinone
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Thanks for listening!
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