

Allergia professionale nel personale sanitario

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KEY WORDS

Allergic contact dermatitis; irritant contact dermatitis; occupational dermatitis; nurses; health care workers; natural rubber latex

SUMMARY

«Occupational contact dermatitis in nurses with eczema of the hands». Background: Health care workers are exposed to many agents that can cause irritant or allergic contact dermatitis. In nurses with eczema of the hands latex sensitivity can play an important role in the occurrence of urticaria, rhinitis and asthma. Objectives: To determine the prevalence of irritant and allergic contact dermatitis and contact urticaria and the role of skin sensitization to common and occupational haptens and allergens in a group of health care workers with skin problems. Methods: Retrospective review of 204 health care workers assessed by prick and patch testing in an occupational health clinic. Results: The diagnoses included 35.3% with irritant contact dermatitis, 64.7% with allergic contact dermatitis and 7.3% with contact urticaria to latex. Three workers complained of asthma and 5 complained of rhinitis related to latex sensitization. At present 12.9% of atopic subjects were sensitized to latex by skin prick against 21.9% in 1998, so sensitization showed a decline in the years considered. Conclusions: Contact dermatitis and sensitization to natural rubber latex is a significant problem and nurses should be tested for both types of hypersensitivity, as well as being patch tested to standard, rubber and disinfectants series. The need is stressed for preventive measures to prevent the onset of contact dermatitis and to avoid latex exposure.

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