

Aspetti epidemiologici dell'allergia al lattice nel personale sanitario

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KEY WORDS

Latex allergy; health care workers; epidemiology

SUMMARY

«Epidemiology of latex allergy in healthcare workers». **Background:** *Natural rubber latex is a recognized allergen and health care workers have an increased risk of sensitisation and allergic symptoms to latex.* **Objectives:** *The aim of the study was to evaluate prevalence and incidence of latex sensitisation and symptoms in health care workers.* **Methods:** *We analyzed the reported data from the scientific literature and from the follow-up study in health care workers in Trieste Hospitals carrying on since 1999.* **Results:** *Latex allergy and sensitisation are significantly higher in health care workers respect to the general population with symptoms, such as urticaria, rhinoconjunctivitis and asthma, ranging between 4 and 5.6%. Latex sensitisation evaluated by skin prick test is ranging between 6 to 7.8%. All studies done demonstrated the reduction of symptoms and incidence sensitisations after the changeover to a powder-free environment and the avoidance of unnecessary glove use.* **Conclusions:** *Health care workers have an increased risk of sensitisation and allergic symptoms to latex but the use of un-powdered latex gloves by all workers and use of non-latex gloves by sensitized subjects can reduce symptoms and prevent new sensitisation. Nevertheless the use of no-latex gloves when available has to be the best choice from the preventive point of view.*