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The Prevalence of Latex-Specific IgE in Patients

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The prevalence of latex-specific IgE in patients presenting to an urban emergency department original article

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Abstract
A correction to this article appears on page 160 of the January 2003 issue.

Study objective:
Since the first report of immediate hypersensitivity to latex was documented in 1979, latex allergy has been increasingly recognized as a medical problem in patient populations. However, there are no data available regarding the seroprevalence of latex sensitivization in patients presenting to the emergency department. The overall aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of latex lgE seropositivity (L-lgE) in ED patients.

Methods:
We measured latex-specific lgE antibodies among a convenience sample of 1,027 patients using the AlaSTAT assay. We also measured serum lgE antibodies specific for 12 common inhalant allergens using the AlaTOP Microplate Allergy Screen assay. Demographic data were collected. Two questions related to latex allergy were queried. Descriptive statistics are presented. Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals (Cls) were calculated for each seroprevalence test. Odds raios (ORs) and 95% Cls were sued to assess the relationship between sex, race, and seropositivity to inhalant allergens and L-lgE.

Results:

The participation rate was 90% (1,027). The mean age of the patients was 46.9 years, 47.6% (489) were maile, and 13.9% (143) were white. Eight-four (8.2%; 95% Ci 6.5% to 10.0%) had positive L-IgE results, and 23.8% (20) of patients with positive L-IgE reults were classified as having strongly positive results. Bivariate analyses showed that being nonwhite (OR 4.7, 95% Ci 1.5 to 15.1) and being seropositve for inhalant allergens (OR 7.4; 95% Ci 4.2 to 13.1) were associated with L-IgE.

Conclusion:
The prevalence of latex sensitization in our sampling is substantial and higher than previously estimated in the general adult population. The clinical significane of seropositivity requires further evaluation. [Ann Emerg Med. 2002;40:411-419.]

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This study is the first large-scale study to document the prevalence of latex sensitivity in patients to an ED. The overall percentage of seropositive for latex-specific IgE antibodies was 8.2%.

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