

**11th Congress of the European Society of Contact Dermatitis,
Malmo, Sweden
June 2012**

I was delighted to be a recipient of a 2012 BAD/Dowling Club SAS Travel Fellowship, which helped fund my recent attendance at the 2012 Congress of the European Society of Contact Dermatitis.

The conference took place in an unusual building, one of Sweden's first municipal slaughter houses. Preservation of the floor plan, old iron pillars and granite floors evoked the bustle, noise and smells of previous activity.

Conference sessions covered all aspects of contact dermatitis. A German group discussed the skin as a metabolising organ of contact sensitizers and the role of cytochrome P450 isoenzymes. The importance of a "danger signal" was confirmed and we were told that Langerhans cells reach draining lymph nodes after dermal dendritic cells. Depending on allergen load, Langerhans cells can either suppress or stimulate T cell activation. Factors influencing skin barrier function were explored and results were presented that clarify earlier studies, suggesting that filaggrin mutations do indeed predispose to allergic contact dermatitis.

Traditional risk factors for hand eczema were confirmed. Teaching hairdressing apprentices the principles of hand care and glove use proved effective in reducing hand eczema in a Danish cohort but surveys continue to show inadequate glove use amongst hairdressers. Results of Swedish studies demonstrated that gloves made of nitrile offer better protection than either natural rubber latex or PVC to permeation of para phenylene diamine and resorcinol, two major hair dye allergens.

Dr. Cleenwerck from Lille suggested that allergy to PVC gloves is under-reported, pointing out that benzisothiazolinone was responsible for a recent outbreak of plastic glove allergy in Finland.

Clinical presentations included reports of patients developing airborne contact dermatitis after entering freshly painted rooms due to cobalt chloride in a radiator paint and methylisothiazolinone in water-based paints. Propolis was highlighted as a common and relevant allergen by a Lithuanian group. Like us, they found propolis to be an important allergen amongst leg ulcer patients. Alginates proved to be the least common sensitizers amongst the modern leg ulcer dressings tested by the Nancy unit in France.

New allergens included solvent orange 60 in spectacle frames and triphenylguanidine in synthetic rubber gloves. Octocrylene is now the most common cause of allergy to sunscreens causing photo contact allergy in 72% of those who are sensitised. Cross reactions between octocrylene, ketoprofen and benzophenone-3 are common.

In Japan, soap has caused an epidemic of immediate hypersensitivity to hydrolysed wheat proteins. Affected patients developed eyelid swelling after eating wheat but facial pruritus after washing with the soap was surprisingly infrequent. More than 50% also developed exercise-induced anaphylaxis. Most had specific IgE antibodies against hydrolyzed gluten but no antibodies to ω 5 gliadin.

A Danish study noted a correlation between allergy to Fragrance mix I and increased life expectancy, especially amongst women. Results of analysis by social class are awaited but in the meantime, their findings suggest that women should be encouraged to use perfumes! To ensure we do not miss fragrance allergies, will be adding to our fragrance series and modifying our patch test methods.