



CONTACT DERMATITIS AND OCCUPATIONAL DERMATOSES

A CARDBOARD HANDLER'S ITCH

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Background: Mr N, a 70-year-old man, presented to the Primary Care Clinic with a year's history of insidious and gradually progressing pruritus over his upper limbs. Mr N had been working at a cardboard recycling factory for the last 2 years, where his job required him to manually tear or cut up large cardboard pieces into smaller ones. He worked indoors, wearing a short sleeved shirt. His symptoms reduced whenever he was off work for a few days.

Observation: Examination revealed generalised xerosis. There were erythematous macules and patches bilaterally extending from his hands to the lower third of his arms. There were scales, excoriation and fissures on both palms and exfoliation on his right palm. There were crusts on the right palm.

The patient was treated for allergic contact dermatitis.

On review 2 weeks later, the signs and symptoms were comparatively less.

Symptoms continued to improve as Mr N subsequently retired from his job.

Key message: This case illustrates the potential for allergic contact dermatitis from cardboard-handling and looks into the possible substances implicated in its occurrence. P-Tertiary-butylphenol formaldehyde resin, a recognised allergen used as an adhesive in cardboard manufacturing is probably the aetiological agent in the case discussed. Although its incidence is low, perhaps more awareness regarding this occupational contact dermatitis in the cardboard industry would ensure proper recognition and institution of preventive measures.

