

CONTACT DERMATITIS TO SANDALWOOD

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A 80-year-old priest developed itchy, erythematous, scaly and fissured area on the centre of his forehead, palmar aspect of right hand fingers and medial half of left palm. These were suspected to be contact dermatitis due to sandalwood paste he was using on these areas. Patch test with sandalwood paste was positive. All the lesions cleared in 10 days after stopping application of sandalwood paste and topical application of betamethasone valerate cream and recurred in 2 days when the application of paste was restarted.

Introduction

Sandalwood (*Santalum album* Linn) is commonly used for manufacturing decorative pieces, and various gift articles. Sandalwood oil, is very frequently incorporated into perfumes, soaps and talcum powders. In addition, pieces of wood moistened with water are grounded on a stone to prepare a paste which is applied on the forehead and the other parts of the body as a ritual. Thus the individual has ample opportunities to come in contact with sandalwood and develop hypersensitivity to it. However contact dermatitis to sandalwood is hardly mentioned in the literature.^{1,2} We report a case having contact dermatitis on his forehead, medial half of left palm and palmar aspect of right hand fingers proved to be due to sandalwood paste.

Case Report

A 80-year-old priest was seen with itchy, erythematous, scaly and fissured areas on the centre of forehead (Fig. 1), distal part of the palmar aspect of his right hand's fingers and medial half of his left palm of 2½ months duration. Patient used to apply sandalwood paste on the centre of his forehead by the right



Fig. 1. Erythema, scaling and fissures on the centre of forehead.

fingers after putting it first on the medial side of left palm since many years. Scraping from the palm and fingers in 10% KOH solution showed no dermatophytic mycelia. The application of sandalwood paste was stopped and betamethasone valerate 0.12% topically was started which led to the clearance of all the lesions during the next 10 days. Patch tests with sandalwood paste, shaving from

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sandalwood twig, flower petals used during worship and scraping of the stone used to prepare the paste showed positive reaction to sandalwood paste only. After 10 days patient restarted applying sandalwood paste on his forehead again by his right finger after putting the paste on his medial half of left palm. Within 2 days, he developed recurrence of itching, erythema and scaling on all the previous sites. The application of sandalwood paste was again stopped. The lesions cleared in 5 days with topical application of betamethasone valerate 0.12%.

Comments

Positive patch test with sandalwood paste the recurrence of the lesions on all sites after restart of application of sandalwood paste confirm that the dermatitis was due to Sandalwood. Pasricha and Ramam¹ recorded a similar type of case where a 64-year-old

priest was using sandalwood paste on his forehead as a ritual and on his hands and feet as a remedy on the areas. In their case patient showed positive reaction to sandalwood paste as well as from the sandalwood twig. Similarly Sharma et al² has also reported one case. The case of photocontact dermatitis reported by Starke³ due to commercial sandalwood oil in an aftershave lotion, showed positive reaction with geranium oil while there was no reaction with sandalwood oil. Thus the photocontact dermatitis was not due to sandalwood oil.

References

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