Thimerosal Induces Toxic Reactions

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Dear Sir,

In their recent study [Int Arch Allergy Immunol 1994;105:296-301], the authors report on a swelling response within 1 h after injection of 0.1% thimerosal. Such a concentration is suggested to be of clinical relevance, as thimerosal is used as preservative in vaccines at concentrations of 0.01% and 0.05%. The mercuric components, methyl mercury and mercuric chloride, also tested induced stronger reactions at the same concentration than thimerosal, but thiosalicylic acid did not react.

Thimerosal consists of ethylmercuric chloride and thiosalicylic acid conjugated by sulfide bridges. Ethylmercuric chloride, the mercuric component of thimerosal, is the causative agent of thimerosal hypersensitivity [1,2]. Therefore, we regret that the authors did not test ethylmercuric chloride instead of methyl mercury and mercuric chloride. The results obtained by testing ethylmercuric chloride would be of great interest in the authors' further investigations.

References

Pirker C, Möslinger T, Wantke F, Götz M, Jarisch R: Ethylmercuric chloride: The responsible agent in thimerosal hypersensitivity. *Contact Dermatitis* 1993;29:152-154. Wantke F, Demmer CM, Götz M, Jarisch R: Contact dermatitis from thimerosal: 2 years' experience with ethylmercuric chloride in patch testing thimerosal-sensitive patients. *Contact Dermatitis* 1994;30:115-117.