

SUMMARY

Food allergy is now recognized as a worldwide medical problem, as food allergy prevalence is gradually increasing. The importance of food allergy in children with atopic eczema, especially during first three years of life, was confirmed by extensive studies. Up to now, studies dealing with food allergy in adult patients suffering from atopic eczema, are rare. It was shown that severe eczema could be worsened by pollen related foods in studies with limited number of patients. However, the significance of food allergy to common food allergens (cow milk, wheat, soy, egg) in adult patients with atopic eczema is very likely underestimated.

The aim of our study was to follow the occurrence of food allergy to cow milk and wheat flour, respectively, and to evaluate the clinical value of atopy patch test, elimination diet, and other diagnostic methods in the diagnostic work - up of food allergy in patients with atopic eczema over 14 years of age compared to double - blind, placebo controlled food challenge, which is considered as a gold standard in diagnostic work - up of food allergy.

Food allergy to cow milk and wheat flour was confirmed in five patients (3,4 %) from 149 patients enrolled to this study (in one patient simultaneously to cow milk and wheat, in four patients to wheat) by double - blind, placebo controlled food challenge test. The skin involvement was improved in all patients with confirmed food allergy to cow milk and wheat during one year of the elimination diet. The introduction of diagnostic hypoallergenic diet was confirmed to be both a valuable tool in the management of the disease and the important diagnostic test in the diagnostic work - up of food allergy.

Double - blind, placebo controlled food challenge has been shown as the most important test in the diagnosis of food allergy. The significant relation between results of skin prick tests and confirmed food allergy was found for cow milk, and the significant relation between positivity of specific IgE with confirmed food allergy was found for wheat. Atopy patch tests were not helpful in diagnosis of food allergy. This study showed that the results of specific IgE, atopy patch tests and skin prick tests cannot be used separately in the determination of food allergy in patients with atopic eczema. Oral food challenge test and double - blind, placebo controlled food challenge may help to prevent ordering of unnecessary restrictive diets to patients, which are not based on a proper diagnosis and may contribute to malnutrition and additional psychological stress in some patients suffering from atopic eczema.