Reviewer's report

Title: A seven-year retrospective analysis of patch test data in a cohort of patients with contact dermatitis in Sri Lanka

Version: 0 Date: 18 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Anna Caroline Pilz

Reviewer's report:

1. Standardized patch test series like the European baseline series frequently undergo changes (e.g. change of concentration of methylchloroisothiazolinone/methylisothiazolinone in 2014 or the addition of the textile dye mix in 2015). Please provide as supplementary information a table displaying the three series that you used. They should ideally include the substances, their concentrations, their dose per unit and their vehicle.

2. Since you did not perform patch tests on randomly selected people of the general population but on patients with contact dermatitis, please replace the term "population" (p.2, l.56) with e.g. "study population" or "tested patients".

3. Please insert a citation for the paragraph about economic costs of contact dermatitis in the USA (p.3, ll.34-39).

4. When reporting that ICBS had the highest positivity rate, please mention that ICBS includes the highest number of tested substances.

5. Are there any determinable reasons for the reduced overall positivity rates (and reduced PPD and MBT positivity rates) over time?

   Were the series (e.g. concentrations of substances) modified during the seven years? Were test indications different (e.g. more tested patients in recent years/ not as strictly selected as before)?

6. In Table 1 only the five most common allergens of the SS and the EBS and not the ICBS are depicted. Please correct your statement accordingly on p.6, l.51.
7. Please remove the word "irritant" (p.7; l. 22). A correctly applied and interpreted positive patch test reaction always is an allergic, not irritant, reaction.

8. Please revise carefully the information taken from the cited articles.

p.7, l.42: The percentages are disaccording with the percentages reported in the abstract.

9. Is there a particular reason for citation number 8? No additional information is provided.

10. Would it be possible to cite more recent papers on the discussed matters?

11. Please revise the following sentences.

p.3, ll.1-3
p.4, ll.5-8
p.8, ll.48-53
12. Please correct the following spelling/grammar/formal mistakes.

p.2, l.3/p.3, l.13: "Background" (one word)

p.3, l.22: "Contact allergies are" (instead of "allergy")

p.3, l.39: insert "to" between "estimated" and "be"

p.3, l.57: remove "also"

p.4, l.5: "get" instead of "gets"

p.5, l.8: "difficulty"

p.5, l.16: remove blank space between "series" and period

p.5, l.26: "collected"

p.2/6/7/8: Please pay attention to small and capital letters (consistent style). If not located at the beginning of a sentence, the mentioned allergens e.g. "nickel sulfate" or "potassium dichromate" do not need to be capitalized.

p.7, l.43: insert blank space (". In")

p.7, l.45: remove blank space between opening parenthesis and "using"

p.8, l.16: comma should be superscripted

p.12, l.15: replace bullet point with symbol used in table
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

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I recommend additional statistical review

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