Anaphylactic Shock to Mediterranean Silverside (Atherina boyeri) Caused by Nonparvalbumin Allergens

Giangrande N1, García-Menaya JM1, Bartolomé B2, Fernández-Bolívar A3, Cordobés-Durán C3, Doñor-Lavado M3, Marcos-Fernández MD3, Bobadilla-González P1

1Allergy Department, Badajoz University Hospital, Badajoz, Spain
2Research and Development Department, Roxall, Bilbao, Spain
3Allergy Department, Don Benito General Hospital, Don Benito, Spain

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Food allergy is a growing health problem worldwide, with fish being one of the most common triggers of reactions. Global consumption of fish as a component of daily diet has been increasing [1], and the estimated prevalence of fish allergy ranges from 0% to 7%, according to geographical area [2]. The underlying pathophysiologic mechanism is mainly IgE-mediated, and symptoms range from urticaria to anaphylaxis. Sensitization usually starts during childhood and persists lifelong, with avoidance being the only therapeutic option [1,3]. Even non–IgE-mediated reactions (including food protein–induced enterocolitis syndrome) have been associated with fish intake [2,4]. Parvalbumin, an acidic calcium-binding protein that is resistant to heat and digestive enzymes is considered a major fish allergen with high cross-reactivity across fish species [1,5].

Mediterranean silverside (Atherina boyeri) is a fish belonging to the Atherinidae family, genus Atherina. A boyeri is also known as pejerrey and tolerates low-salinity water. It lives in the Mediterranean and other seas. We report the case of a patient with a history of immediate systemic hypersensitivity reaction after ingestion of pejerrey and tolerance to other fish. His allergology study suggested IgE-mediated sensitization to allergens other than parvalbumins. To our knowledge, there is only 1 previous publication reporting 2 cases of allergy to pejerrey with tolerance to other fish [6].

A 49-year-old man with a history of atopy (drug allergy and food allergy to peach), who, immediately after intake of fried pejerrey, experienced dysphonia, dysphagia, itching in the genital area, malar angioedema, and syncope. In the emergency department, his blood pressure was 60/40 mmHg and oxygen saturation was 95%. He was treated with intravenous hydrocortisone 200 mg and dexamethasone 5 mg, intramuscular epinephrine 0.5 mg, and fluid therapy. His condition improved within a few hours. Serum tryptase was not measured during the reaction. The patient was subsequently referred to our allergy department. His clinical history ruled out simultaneous use of drugs and the presence of possible cofactors. After the reaction, the patient avoided ingestion of pejerrey and continues to tolerate other fish species.

We performed a skin prick test with a battery of commercial raw fish (tuna, sardine, cod, and hake) and Anisakis simplex extracts and prick-by-prick tests with cooked and raw pejerrey. Serum specific IgE to cod, tuna, anchovy, and sardine was determined using the Immulite assay (Siemens). Specific IgE to A simplex, hake, and recombinant parvalbumins (rGad c 1 and rCyp c 1) were determined by ImmunoCAP (Thermo Fisher).

Protein extracts from pejerrey body and pejerrey head and viscera were prepared by homogenization in phosphate-buffered saline, dialyzation, and lyophilization. SDS-PAGE immunoblotting was carried out under reducing conditions (2-mercaptoethanol) with pejerrey extracts, as described by Laemmli [7], using a patient serum dilution of 1/3, a secondary antibody dilution of 1/10 000 (SouthernBiotech), and a chemiluminescent detection method (GE Healthcare UK Limited).

The results of the skin prick tests with the fish extracts tested and the A simplex extract were negative. Prick-by-prick tests to cooked and raw pejerrey were positive (10 mm and 7 mm, respectively). Serum specific IgE results for A simplex, cod, hake, tuna, anchovy, sardine, and recombinant parvalbumins (rGad c 1 and rCyp c 1) were all negative. SDS PAGE immunoblotting with head and viscera extract revealed 2 IgE-reactive bands, a broad band of 60-55 kDa and another of 34 kDa (Figure). However, no bands were detected with the pejerrey body extract.

According to the clinical history and positive in vivo and in vitro results, the patient was considered to have experienced an anaphylactic reaction to pejerrey with tolerance to other fish species and sensitization to allergens other than parvalbumin. Subsequently, we advised the patient to avoid pejerrey and to check the ingredients listed for foods that might contain it. No restrictions were placed on other fish species.

Parvalbumin has been recognized as the major fish allergen since 1969. Parvalbumin is a low-molecular-weight protein (10-12 kDa) that is water-soluble and calcium-binding in muscle. It is thermally stable and able to preserve its allergenic activity, even under acidic conditions and after pepsinolysis. The high amino acid sequence homology for the parvalbumins of different fish species is responsible for the common cross-reactivity between them. In fact, IgE-binding parvalbumins have been detected in over 90% of fish-allergic patients [5,9].
However, minor allergens, such as fish enolase, aldolase, and gelatine, have been shown to trigger monosensitivity and oligosensitivity via IgE-mediated reactions to specific fish species without sensitization to parvalbumin IgE, and various publications have reported clinical cases of monosensitivity and oligosensitivity to specific fish species, thus highlighting the role of new fish allergens other than parvalbumin [8-10].

In 2009, Kuehn et al [8] published an anecdotal clinical case of an anaphylactic reaction caused by ingestion of marshmallows containing fish gelatine. The in vitro study detected protein bands of 110 and 210 kDa corresponding to the hetero α chains and β chain of tuna collagen, whereas parvalbumin was not identified. Kuehn et al [9] also reported the first cases of sensitization to fish aldolase (40-50 kDa) and enolase (20 kDa) in patients with a history of allergic reaction to cod, with a negative in vitro study result for parvalbumin. The importance of fish enolase and aldolase as new fish allergens has subsequently been investigated. According to the IgE binding patterns for parvalbumins, fish-allergic patients have been classified into 3 IgE-based clusters, with as many as 28% of patients recognizing only IgE to enolase, aldolase, and fish gelatine [10]. In 2014, Gonzalez-Mancebo et al [6] reported 2 cases of anaphylaxis to silverside. Using SDS-PAGE immunoblotting and tandem mass spectrometry, the authors identified bands of 28.5 kDa and 38 kDa in pejerrey body; these corresponded, respectively, to triosephosphate isomerase β and glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase [6].

To our knowledge, we report the third case of anaphylaxis to pejerrey in a patient who tolerated other fish species. SDS-PAGE immunoblotting detected IgE-reactive bands (55-60 kDa and 34 kDa) in the head and viscera extract, although no bands were detected in muscle. Similarly, no IgE to recombinant parvalbumins or binding bands of its molecular weight (12 kDa) were detected. Even though we did not perform an oral challenge test with pejerrey, in vivo and in vitro studies suggested an IgE-mediated anaphylactic reaction, with recognition of 2 allergens other than parvalbumin.

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**Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

**Previous Presentation**

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**References**

Nonimmediate Maculopapular Erythema Induced by a Gadolinium-Based Contrast Agent

Gauthier A1,2*, Mankouri F1*, Demoly P1,3, Chiriac AM1,3

1Department of Pulmonology, Division of Allergy, Hôpital Arnaud de Villeneuve, University Hospital of Montpellier, Université de Montpellier, Montpellier, France
2Department of Allergy and Immunology, Laval University Hospital Center, Laval University, Quebec City, Canada
3Institut Desbrest d’Épidémiologie et de Santé Publique UMR INSERM - Université de Montpellier, Montpellier, France

*Both authors contributed equally

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Gadolinium-based contrast agents (GBCAs) are used to enhance tissue contrast during magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). They can be classified according to ionicity as ionic or nonionic, or according to their molecular structure as macrocyclic or linear. GBCAs are considered safer than iodinated contrast media (ICM), less frequently eliciting immediate hypersensitivity reactions (<1 hour after exposure). On the other hand, nonimmediate hypersensitivity reactions (NIHS, >1 hour after exposure) to ICM are well known and described, although not for GBCAs.

We recently published a retrospective analysis of 132 consecutive patients assessed for suspected hypersensitivity to GBCA in our unit [1]. Of the 132 patients tested, 22 (16.7%) had a history of NIHS, but only 1 had positive skin test results confirming an NIHS to GBCAs. We report the case of a patient who experienced GBCA-induced maculopapular exanthema (MPE). The patient gave his consent for publication of his case.

An otherwise healthy 72-year-old man underwent surgery for spondylolisthesis (arthrodesis). Nine months later, a second procedure was performed to remove an osteosynthesis plate. After surgery, the patient developed fever. Blood culture was positive for Staphylococcus capitis, and the infection was treated with ofloxacin and rifampicin for 1 month. Three weeks after surgery, a first lumbar MRI with injection of an unknown GBCA revealed spondylodiscitis. Antibiotic therapy was subsequently switched to vancomycin and rifampicin. Five weeks later, given the persistence of fever despite antibiotic therapy, a second MRI was performed with gadobutrol, followed by a computed tomography scan with iopromide 3 days later. On day 8 after this second MRI, the patient developed febrile macular exanthema on the trunk and lower limbs. This was nonpruritic and associated with purpuric lesions on the lower limbs.

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Jesús Miguel García-Menaya
Allergy Department
Badajoz University Hospital
Av de Elvas, s/n
06011 Badajoz Spain
E-mail: jesusmiguelgarciamenaya@gmail.com