

Anaphylaxis from latex in vaccine packaging: syringe rubber (MBT) contamination of injections

Dear Editor,

**Re: "Just who's calling the shots," by Jonathon Sher (London Free Press, Letter-to-the-editor, 31/01/12)**

Justifiable vaccination of the masses has virtually eliminated polio, diphtheria, tetanus, and smallpox and stands to offer protection during any future deadly influenza epidemics. Severe reactions to vaccines should be rare and deaths should be exceedingly rare. No one should fear vaccination if due care is exercised by manufacturers and the nurses and doctors administering them.

However, since at least 1981, routine injections have risked contamination by natural rubber parts of syringes and ampoules, resulting in severe allergic reactions and death. Although such reactions have been routinely attributed to latex, an even more significant danger lies in MBT, a catalyst essential for converting latex into natural rubber and which is both allergenic and toxic. MBT was found at "potentially toxic" levels in 91 babies in Hammersmith Hospital in London, England at the time of the poisoning epidemic in Toronto (1980-81), falsely attributed to digoxin poisoning by nurse Susan Nelles. MBT was falsely being read as digoxin by the test methods at the time.

The medical and nursing professions have been kept unaware of MBT and generally kept unaware when natural rubber exposure to injections is present, with the presence of natural rubber contact often being absent on packaging (Harvard's R.G. Hamilton, American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy, 2005, Volume 62, 1822-27). Two patients in my office almost died of anaphylactic shock when the x-ray dye being injected was contaminated with MBT. Although MBT contamination of injections was occurring worldwide, these are the only two cases recognized and reported in the world medical literature - and there was difficulty in getting these cases published.

The 1996 US FDA's Final Rule (created in response to many deaths attributable to natural rubber contact) stated that natural rubber with MBT should not come in contact with injections. It was flagrantly unenforced. A Centers for Disease Control notice, "Latex in Vaccine Packaging," that was up-dated August 2010, lists 28 vaccines, many for children, with natural rubber contact.

Four children in Japan died (2011-2012) after receiving Sanofi-Pasteur ActHIB whooping cough vaccine, one on the CDC's list of 28 vaccines.

Those administering should "ask government regulatory bodies and manufacturers when natural rubber manufactured with MBT was last used in unit dose syringes

and what are the expiry dates of the drugs involved" ("The Nurses are Innocent - The Digoxin Poisoning Fallacy," Dundurn Press, 2011).

Posted by: **Gavin Hamilton MD FRCPC**, on: January 31, 2012 London Free Press,  
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