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Regarding “Risks and benefits of using chlorhexidine gluconate in handwashing: a systematic literature review”



To the Editor:

We read with interest the systematic review entitled “Risks and benefits of using chlorhexidine gluconate in handwashing: a systematic literature review.”¹ We remind the authors and the readership of the *American Journal of Infection Control* that chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) is not only a known skin irritant² but also a cause of allergic contact dermatitis,³ which can impair the skin barrier. For this reason, the American Contact Dermatitis Society

recommends testing all patients with chronic dermatitis for CHG contact allergy as a part of its Core patch testing series.⁴ Furthermore, CHG may cause photo allergic contact dermatitis,⁵ urticarial reactions,⁶ fixed drug eruptions,⁷ and even anaphylaxis.⁸ It is important for health care workers to understand these potential adverse events because CHG contact allergy may be misdiagnosed as cellulitis,⁹ leading to unnecessary and expensive treatments. Finally, recognizing these risks is necessary to prevent iatrogenic re-exposures in known CHG-allergic patients, which may cause rebound CHG-specific IgE.¹⁰

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Conflicts of interest: Dathan Hamann is a first degree relative of Curt Hamann, who is the owner of SmartPractice, a company that produces and sells patch test supplies, including an allergy test for chlorhexidine gluconate.

Author contributions: Both authors have participated sufficiently to take public responsibility for the planning, writing, and drafting of this manuscript.

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