Allergic constipation – common and treatable

Kane Wu, David Croaker
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Cows’ milk protein exclusion diets (CMPED) seem to be frequently curative for children referred to the constipation clinic.

How frequent is this?

Are these children recognisably different to other constipated children at initial presentation?
As part of a heritability study, we characterised the group of patients with presumed allergic based constipation to answer the above questions.
Materials and methods

- One year prospective study
- 85 children
- CMPED trial recommended at initial visit as part of workup.
- 20 who responded to dietary exclusion included.
Results

- 20 of 85 responders
  - 19 CMPED
  - 1 soy exclusion

- M:F = 16:4

- Obvious anal fissure in 1/3.
Results

- Average onset: 1.4 years

- 75% have family history of atopic disease

- Autism spectrum common in families of functional constipation, but rare in families of allergic constipation.
Results

- **Lab investigation:**
  - Rectal biopsy: 6
    Eosinophils seen in 1
  - IgE: tested in 3; neg in 1 of 3.

- Coeliac and thyroid screening negative in all.
Atopic disease is common in Australia.

Cows’ milk protein allergy is a very common cause of chronic constipation.

Commonly (but not always) symptoms start after cessation of breastfeeding.
Discussion

- Changing diet may be hard in young children.
- Allow time.
- Involve a dietitian.
Conclusion

- Allergy is a common source of constipation symptoms, and an early cows’ milk exclusion trial will dispose of significant numbers of cases ...

  to the great relief of all!