

Food Allergy Testing

In 1984, researchers from the University of Hawaii compared six different diagnostic modalities for assessing food allergies. These tests included history, food challenge, skin, RAST, IgE antibodies, and electrodermal testing on thirty volunteers. The testing was done in a double-blind fashion, with the patients not knowing what antigens were being tested, and the instrument operator not knowing anything about the patient's food sensitivities.

In over 300 tests, electrodermal testing matched the history 74 percent of the time, the food rechallenge test 77 percent of the time, skin testing 71 percent of the time, and RAST testing 69 percent of the time. The authors concluded that "the EAV (electrodermal testing) data obtained in this experiment demonstrates the highest degree of compatibility with the food challenge test, which is considered to be the most sensitive of the currently available diagnostic techniques for food allergy.

In addition, the EAV results were comparable with both skin and RAST tests. In comparing these three double-blind studies, it is of interest to note that the number of "false positives" identified by electrodermal testing greatly exceeds the number of "false negatives." The breakdown is as follows:

Study: False positives/False negatives - Ali 22/5 Krop 42/2 Tsuei 67/18 Totals: 131/25 Krop points out that in his study, the subjects were only tested to things to which they reported an adverse response. He expressed the opinion that these apparent "false positives" were not false at all, but merely reflected a greater sensitivity of the electrodermal testing compared to the more traditional testing to which it was compared. The results of the other two studies may also have reflected this greater sensitivity with electrodermal testing.