

Reply



To the Editor: We thank Felmingham et al for their comment on our letter regarding how to improve the clinical experience for dermatology patients requiring a genital examination.

We acknowledge and appreciate the concern regarding the possible instilment of the belief that the genital area should always be cleaned and perfumed before being seen. We agree that this could potentially encourage self-consciousness; however, it is important to recognize that genital examinations are inherently embarrassing for many patients and that this practice brings them discomfort and anxiety. Nakedness, odor concerns, and genital exposure on the examination chair or table combine to instill a sense of vulnerability and shame.¹ Taking account of these feelings, we desire to minimize discomfort during genital examination by addressing a common concern or offering a gesture of kindness and understanding as we discuss later.

We agree that fragranced wet wipes are a potential source of allergic contact dermatitis and that genital skin has susceptibility to develop such reactions. Although Nice 'n Clean Scented Baby Wipes are reportedly hypoallergenic, alcohol- and paraben-free, and have a gently scented formula, making the event of an allergic reaction from a 1-time use rare, we agree that a fragrance-free formulation is preferred. Importantly, in their retrospective analysis of data from >9037 patients, Warshaw et al² found that wipes as a source of contact dermatitis was fairly uncommon, representing 0.9% of patch-tested patients. Similarly, Cheng and Fernández-Peñas³ found that of 3460 patients patch tested over a 15-year study period, only 64 were referred with anogenital dermatoses (2%). Fifteen (23%) of the 64 were considered atopic and not allergic.³ Nonetheless, we agree with the authors and should be clear with patients that the provision of wipes at the clinic is for their comfort during examination and that we do not recommend the regular use of wipes at home.

We recognized that the offer itself may have contributed to the increase in patient satisfaction as opposed to the actual use of the wipe. Regardless, our findings suggest that the simple, low-cost intervention of offering patients a mildly scented ~2-cent wipe before their genital examination can not only increase their satisfaction with the genital

examination but also their overall experience.⁴ Thus, we believe that even if the provision of wipes is perceived as an act of kindness, it has a positive impact on the patient experience.

We again thank the authors for their thoughtful comment to our study and letter. We agree with use of hypoallergenic products and agree that further research and efforts to optimize certain parts of the physical examination and health assessment are needed. We hope that bringing forward this concern will motivate further discussion on how best to alleviate the self-consciousness and discomfort caused by a genital examination.

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Conflicts of interest

None disclosed.

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