Wood contact dermatitis is a rare condition, but it is frequently reported in occupational contexts, especially in association with tropical woods [1]. Sensitization in such cases is related to direct or airborne exposure to wood dust [1]. There have been only rare reports of sensitization to solid wood and finished wood products such as instruments, wooden jewelry, and knife handles [1].

We report the case of a 38-year-old woman, blind since the age of 15 years due to retinal detachment, who developed contact dermatitis after exposure to wood. In the previous 14 months, she had developed erythema on both hands, as well as severe lesions consisting of erythematous lichenified plaques alternating with vesicles, particularly affecting the tips of the fingers. The lesions resulted in dreadful itching and a progressive loss of sensitivity that prevented the patient from reading Braille and therefore regain quality of life.

The exhaustive investigation of less common potential contact allergens was essential for the diagnosis of contact dermatitis to wood in our patient, with results showing sensitization to 1 exotic wood (G balsamiferum) and 2 nonexotic woods (F sylvatica and Q robur) through exposure to finished articles.

Contact dermatitis to exotic wood has been reported in the past [2,3], but we found no recent reports. Sensitization to F sylvatica, in contrast, has been rarely reported in the past, but there have been some recent cases described in occupational settings [4,5]. Q robur seems to be less likely to induce contact dermatitis, with only 1 report of 3 patients in the literature [6]. The negative results to allergens from the European baseline series used in the preparation of wood varnishes, resins, and preservatives corroborate exclusive sensitization to wood.

Complete avoidance of the objects made with the woods to which our patient was sensitized resulted in the remission of skin lesions. The specific diagnosis was essential in this particular case as it allowed us to propose specific measures to help the patient, who was blind, to recover her ability to read braille and therefore regain quality of life.

References