

Validation and Subsequent Development of the Derek Skin Sensitization Rulebase by Analysis of the BgVV List of Contact Allergens

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The DEREK knowledge-based computer system contains a subset of approximately 50 rules describing chemical substructures (toxophores) responsible for skin sensitization. This rulebase, based originally on Unilever historical in-house guinea pig maximization test data, has been subject to extensive validation and is undergoing refinement as the next stage of its development. As part of an ongoing program of validation and testing, the predictive ability of the sensitization rule set has been assessed by processing the structures of the 84 chemical substances in the list of contact allergens issued by the BgVV (German Federal Institute for Health Protection of Consumers). This list of chemicals is important because the biological data for each of the chemicals have been carefully scrutinized and peer reviewed, a key consideration in an area of toxicology in which much unreliable and potentially misleading data have been published. The existing DEREK rulebase for skin sensitization identified toxophores for skin sensitization in the structures of 71 out of the 84 chemicals (85%). The exercise highlighted areas of chemistry where further development of the rulebase was required, either by extension of the scope of existing rules or by generation of new rules where a sound mechanistic rationale for the biological activity could be established. Chemicals likely to be acting as photoallergens were identified, and new rules for photoallergenicity have subsequently been written. At the end of the exercise, the refined rulebase was able to identify toxophores for skin sensitization for 82 of the 84 chemicals in the BgVV list.

INTRODUCTION

Relationships between the structure and properties of chemicals can be programmed into knowledge-based systems. DEREK (an acronym for "Deductive Estimation of Risk from Existing Knowledge")^{1,2} is one such system for the qualitative prediction of chemical toxicity that is now in widespread use in the chemical industry. The system covers various toxicological endpoints including mutagenicity, carcinogenicity, skin sensitization, neurotoxicity, and reproductive toxicity, with the rulebase for the latter two endpoints in early stages of development.

DEREK embodies both a controlling program and a chemical rulebase. The chemical rulebase consists of descriptions of molecular substructures previously found to correlate with specific toxicological endpoints. The user communicates with DEREK via interactive computer graphics by drawing the 2-dimensional (2D) chemical structure of the query chemical on the screen. The rulebase is then searched against the query structure and any structural alert is highlighted together with a message indicating the nature of the toxicological hazard.

The DEREK rulebase is under constant development, particularly in the area of skin sensitization. Rulebase development takes place in collaboration with existing DEREK users with the result that rules are based both on commercial in-house data as well as the published literature.

THE SKIN SENSITIZATION RULEBASE

For a chemical to be biologically active, it must first be transported from its site of administration to its site of action and then it must bind to or react with its receptor or target;³ that is, biological activity is a function of partition and reactivity. DEREK contains a subset of approximately 50 rules that describe chemical substructures known or believed to be responsible for the chemical reactivity component of skin sensitization. This rulebase was initially derived from Unilever historical in-house guinea pig maximization test data for 294 single chemical substances of known chemical purity.^{4,5} Those chemicals that classified as skin sensitizers by EC criteria⁶ (135 of the 294) were arranged in groups according to their most likely mechanism of reaction with skin proteins. Where the chemical mechanism could not be clearly identified, structural alerts were derived for groups of chemicals with similar functional groups. This process resulted in the generation of around 40 structure–activity rules.⁵ As a result of further development, the number of structural alerts for skin sensitization has now been increased to >50.⁷

THE BgVV LIST OF CONTACT ALLERGENS

In 1995, the German Federal Institute for Health Protection of Consumers (BgVV) published a list of 84 chemical substances identified as contact allergens.⁸ This list is important because the biological data for each chemical had been carefully scrutinized and peer-reviewed—a key consideration in an area of toxicology in which much unreliable and poten-

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tially misleading data are published. The names and CAS numbers of the chemicals in this list are shown in Table 1.

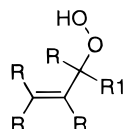
THE VALIDATION EXERCISE

As part of an ongoing program of validation and testing of the DEREK system, the predictive ability of the skin sensitization rulebase has been assessed by processing the structures of the 84 chemicals on the BgVV list. The results of that analysis are shown in Table 2. The DEREK rulebase for skin sensitization initially identified toxophores in the structures of 71 out of the 84 chemicals (85%). DEREK was unable to process one chemical, a mercury compound, because its molecular weight is beyond the scope of the program. The 12 contact allergens not identified by the rulebase as containing structural alerts for skin sensitization are three photoallergens, four organic hydroperoxides, one phenolic compound, one thiol exchange agent, one hydroxylamine precursor, one cyclopropanone derivative, and one chemical (*N*-vinylcarbazole) for which the sensitization potential cannot at this stage be unequivocally explained. The structures of these 12 chemicals are shown in Figure 1. This exercise highlighted several areas of chemistry where further development of the rulebase was required. A sound mechanistic rationale can be established for the biological activity of the three photoallergens, four organic hydroperoxides, and the hydroxylamine precursor, which results in the generation of three new rules. A review of the skin sensitization literature was carried out relating to these specific chemical classes; further examples were discovered that supported the proposed mechanisms of action, and these were used to support the structure-activity relationships described in the new rules.

There were existing rules in DEREK that covered skin sensitization by phenolic compounds, thiol exchange agents, and α,β -unsaturated ketones. On the basis of the knowledge available when they were written, these rules did not cover the three chemicals from these classes in the current dataset.

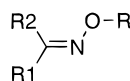
RULEBASE MODIFICATION

1. Organic Hydroperoxides. The new DEREK rule for organic hydroperoxides contains the following structural alert



where R = H, aliphatic carbon; R1 = aliphatic carbon. The rule is supported by the known sensitization potential of the hydroperoxides of α -pinene,⁹ abietic acid,¹⁰ Δ^3 -carene,¹¹ α -terpineol,⁹ and limonene.¹² Reaction between the haptens and skin proteins has been shown to take place via free radical mechanisms.¹³

2. Hydroxylamine and Precursors. The new DEREK rule for hydroxylamine and precursors contains the following structural alert



where R = H or alkyl and R1 and R2 are alkyl or aryl. The

rule is supported by the known sensitization potentials of hydroxylamine,¹⁴ butanone oxime,^{14,15} and *O*-ethylhydroxylamine.¹⁶ The basis of this rule is the skin sensitization potential of hydroxylamine and the ability of the precursors to be metabolised in vivo to give hydroxylamine. The chemical mechanism of hydroxylamine sensitization remains to be elucidated.



hydroxylamine



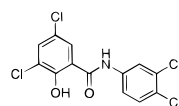
butanone oxime

*O*-ethylhydroxylamine

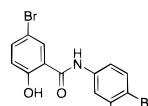
3. Photoallergens. There are three new DEREK rules covering photoallergens. The first, which is for halogenated phenolic compounds, contains the following structural alerts



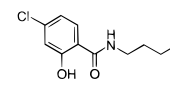
where X = Cl, Br, I and R = S or amido. The rule is supported by the known photoallergenicity of 3,3',4',5-tetrachlorosalicylanilide,¹⁷ 3',4',5-tribromosalicylanilide,¹⁸ buclosamide,¹⁹ fentichlor,²⁰ multifungin,²⁰ and bithionol.²¹ Halogenated phenolic compounds of this type have been shown to react covalently with proteins on irradiation with ultraviolet light.^{22,23} The mechanism of protein conjugate formation is thought to proceed via free radical mechanisms; free radicals have been detected and characterized using electron spin resonance spectroscopy on ultraviolet irradiation of several of these chemicals [e.g., ref 24].



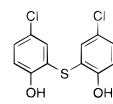
3,3',4',5-tetrachlorosalicylanilide



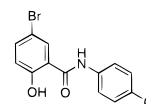
3',4',5-tribromosalicylanilide



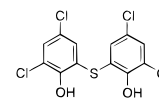
buclosamide



fentichlor

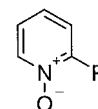


multifungin

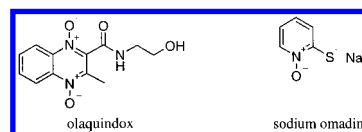


bithionol

The second photoallergen rule contains the structural alert



where R = S, O, N, or amido; alkyl or aryl substituents are allowed on other positions of the aromatic ring. This rule is supported by the known photoallergenicity of olaquinox²⁵ and sodium omadine.²⁶ Sodium omadine has been shown to bind covalently to human serum albumin on irradiation with ultraviolet light.²²



The third photoallergen rule contains the structural alerts

Table 1. BgVV Skin Sensitizers, CAS Numbers and DEREK Skin Sensitization Rules Fired

| name | CAS no. | DEREK rules fired |
|---|-------------|--|
| | Category A | |
| formaldehyde | 50-00-0 | 419 aldehyde |
| 4-aminophenylazobenzene | 60-09-3 | 427 aromatic primary amine 428 amine precursor - aromatic azo compound |
| 2,4-dinitrofluorobenzene | 70-34-8 | 415 halo-di/trinitro aromatic compound |
| <i>N,N'</i> -diphenyl- <i>p</i> -phenylenediamine | 74-31-7 | 427 aromatic secondary amine |
| choroacetamide | 79-07-2 | 413 haloalkane |
| musk ambrette | 83-66-9 | I |
| naphthol AS | 92-77-3 | II |
| benzocaine | 94-09-7 | 427 aromatic primary amine |
| dicyclopentamethylenethiuramdisulphide | 94-37-1 | 442 thiuram disulphide |
| <i>p</i> -toluenediamine and salts | 95-70-5 | 427 Primary aromatic amine |
| 3-thioglycerol | 96-27-5 | III |
| 2,4-dinitrochlorobenzene | 97-00-7 | 415 halo-di/trinitro aromatic compound |
| tetramethylthiurammonosulphide | 97-74-5 | 442 thiuram monosulphide |
| tetraethylthiuramdisulphide | 97-77-8 | 442 thiuram disulphide |
| phenylhydrazine | 100-63-0 | 448 hydrazine or hydrazine precursor |
| 4-aminodiphenylamine | 101-54-2 | 427 aromatic primary/secondary amine |
| <i>N</i> -isopropyl- <i>N'</i> -phenyl- <i>p</i> -phenylenediamine | 101-72-4 | 427 aromatic secondary amine |
| 4,4'-diaminodiphenylmethane | 101-77-9 | 427 aromatic primary amine |
| <i>N</i> -cyclohexyl- <i>N'</i> -phenyl- <i>p</i> -phenylenediamine | 101-87-1 | 427 aromatic secondary amine |
| cinnamaldehyde | 104-55-2 | 419 aldehyde |
| <i>p</i> -phenylenediamine | 106-50-3 | 427 aromatic primary amine |
| allylglycidylether | 106-92-3 | 433 epoxide |
| ethylenediamine | 107-15-3 | 435 1,2-diamine |
| glyoxal | 107-22-2 | 419 aldehyde |
| diethylenetriamine | 111-40-0 | 435 1,2-diamine |
| triethylenetetramine | 112-24-3 | 435 1,2-diamine |
| phenylglycidylether | 122-60-1 | 433 epoxide |
| <i>p</i> -aminophenol | 123-30-8 | 427 primary aromatic amine 439 phenol |
| tetramethylthiuramdisulphide | 137-26-8 | 442 thiuram disulphide |
| 2-mercaptobenzothiazole | 149-30-4 | 410 isothiocyanate 432 thiol |
| hydrazine and salts | 302-01-2 | 448 hydrazine or hydrazine precursor |
| isoalantolactone | 470-17-7 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ester |
| 2-chloroacetophenone | 532-27-4 | 413 haloalkane |
| alantolactone | 546-43-0 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ester |
| tulipalin A | 547-65-9 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ester |
| costunolide | 553-21-9 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ester |
| thioglycolic acid hydrazide | 760-30-5 | 432 thiol 448 hydrazine or hydrazine precursor |
| diphenylcyclopropenone | 886-38-4 | IV |
| 3,3',4',5-tetrachlorosalicylanilide | 1154-59-2 | V |
| <i>N</i> -vinylcarbazole | 1484-13-5 | VI |
| bisphenol A diglycidyl ether | 1675-54-3 | 433 epoxide |
| carabrone | 1748-81-8 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ester |
| 1,4-butanediol diglycidyl ether | 2425-79-8 | 433 epoxide |
| <i>n</i> -butylglycidyl ether | 2426-08-6 | 433 epoxide |
| 2-chloro- <i>N</i> -hydroxymethylacetamide | 2832-19-1 | 413 haloalkane 426 formaldehyde donor |
| pentaerythritol triacrylate | 3524-68-3 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ester |
| deoxylapachol | 3568-90-9 | 416 quinone |
| <i>R</i> -3,4-dimethoxydalbergione | 3755-64-4 | 416 quinone |
| 3,4-diethoxycyclobutenedione | 5231-87-8 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ketone |
| 2-nitro- <i>p</i> -phenylenediamine | 5307-14-2 | 425 enol precursor of a ketone |
| helenalin | 6754-13-8 | 427 aromatic primary amine 421 α,β -unsaturated ester |
| <i>t</i> -butylglycidyl ether | 7665-72-7 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ketone |
| mansonon A | 7715-94-8 | 433 epoxide |
| potassium dichromate | 7778-50-9 | 416 quinone |
| nickel and its salts | 7718-54-9 | 443 metal salt containing Co, Cr, Ni, Be |
| turpentine oil (α -terpineol) | 8006-64-2 | 443 metal salt containing Co, Cr, Ni, Be |
| colophony (abietic acid) | 8050-09-7 | VII |
| Δ^3 -carene | 13466-78-9 | VIII |
| primin | 15121-94-5 | IX |
| trimethylol propane triacrylate | 15625-89-5 | 416 quinone |
| parthenolide | 20554-84-1 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ester 421 α,β -unsaturated ester |
| organomercury compounds | 22967-92-6 | 433 epoxide (cannot process) |
| olaquinox | 23696-28-8 | X |
| 2-methyl-4-[(methylphenyl)azo]aniline | 41576-40-3 | 427 aromatic primaryamine |
| 1,1-dimethylallyl caffeate | 100884-13-7 | 428 amine precursor - aromatic azo compd 418 catechol |

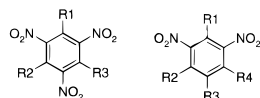
Table 1 (Continued)

| name | CAS no. | DEREK rules fired |
|--|-----------|--|
| Category B | | |
| bisphenol A | 80-05-7 | 439 phenol |
| α -pinene and oxidation products | 80-56-8 | XI |
| morpholinylthiobenzothiazole | 95-32-9 | 410 isothiocyanate |
| methylethylketoxime | 96-29-7 | XII |
| <i>p</i> -tert-butylcatechol | 98-29-3 | 418 catechol |
| resorcinol | 108-46-3 | 440 resorcinol |
| piperazine | 110-85-0 | 435 1,2-diamine |
| tetraethylenepentamine | 112-57-2 | 435 1,2-diamine |
| 4,4'-diaminodiphenylamine | 537-65-5 | 427 aromatic primary and secondary amine |
| 4,4'-diaminoazobenzene | 538-41-0 | 427 aromatic primary amine |
| <i>N</i> -dimethylbutyl- <i>N'</i> -phenyl- <i>p</i> -phenylenediamine | 793-24-8 | 428 amine precursor - aromatic azo compd |
| 4-diethylaminoazobenzene | 2481-94-9 | 427 aromatic secondary amine |
| groton BK | 4719-04-4 | 428 amine precursor - aromatic azo compd |
| Category C | | |
| dipropyleneetriamine | 56-18-8 | 435 1,3-diamine |
| <i>n</i> -butylmethacrylate | 97-88-8 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ester |
| 4,4'-diaminodiphenylether | 101-80-4 | 427 aromatic primary amine |
| <i>N,N'</i> -diethylaminopropylamine | 104-78-9 | 435 1,3-diamine |
| tetrahydrofurfurylmethacrylate | 2455-24-5 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ester |
| bisphenol A dimethacrylate | 253-39-2 | 421 α,β -unsaturated ester |

Table 2. The BgVV Contact Allergen List: Performance of the DEREK Skin Sensitization Rulebase^a

| parameter | category A (strong) | category B (moderate) | category C (weak) | total |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------|
| structural alert for skin sensitization | 54 | 11 | 6 | 71 |
| no structural alert for skin sensitization | 10 | 2 | 0 | 12 |
| cannot process | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| total | 65 | 13 | 6 | 84 |

^a Eight-four chemicals in three categories; 71 out of 84 chemicals identified as containing a structural alert for skin sensitization represents a "hit rate" of 85%.



For the dinitro compounds, R1 can be a primary substituent (not secondary or tertiary) up to four carbon atoms long, R2, R4 = H, methyl, or methoxy, and R3 = any sp^2 or sp^3 carbon. For the trinitro compounds, R1 can be a primary substituent up to four carbon atoms long, R2, R3 = H, methyl, or methoxy. These requirements are based on the hypothesis proposed by Motten et al.²⁷ that to be a photoallergen, the chemicals must be capable, on photolysis, of forming a nitro radical anion that is coplanar with the aromatic ring. The coplanar nitro radical anion can then go on to be metabolized into a reactive intermediate. Because of steric constraints, the related chemicals musk xylene and musk ketone, which are not reported to cause any photoallergic reactions, can only form nitro radical anions which are out of plane with the aromatic ring.

Diphenylcyclopropanone is a cyclic α,β -unsaturated ketone that probably reacts with nucleophiles by 1,4-addition. Indeed, the highly strained nature of the cyclopropane ring would lead to a large gain in enthalpy from this reaction and make this particularly reactive. However, according to the DEREK chemical perception routines, the cyclopropanone ring system is aromatic because it conforms to the Huckel ($4n + 2$), g electrons rule ($n = 0$) for determining

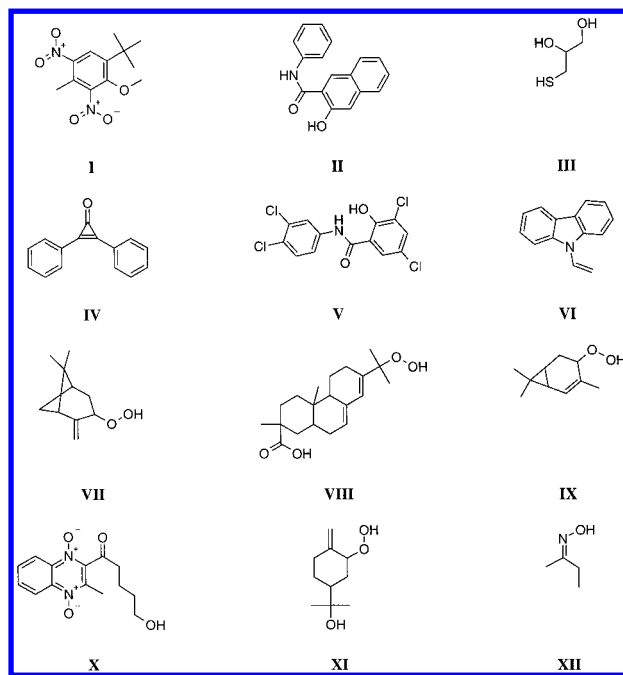


Figure 1.

aromaticity. For this reason, the existing rule for α,β -unsaturated ketones was not activated for diphenylcyclopropanone. It was a simple task to extend the rule to allow any cyclopropanone to fire this rule.

ANALYSIS AFTER RULEBASE MODIFICATION

Following the modifications to the rulebase just mentioned, DEREK was able to identify toxophores for skin sensitization in 82 of the 84 chemicals (98%). We can currently find no basis in mechanistic organic chemistry for the sensitization potential of *N*-vinylcarbazole as a direct acting allergen. One possibility is that the vinyl group may be oxidized to an epoxide, which could then react with skin protein. In the absence of any evidence, however, this explanation is purely speculative. The atomic weight of mercury is currently too high for the mercury compounds to be processed by the

DEREK operating system. This deficiency is due to be remedied in the near future.

CONCLUSIONS

This validation exercise demonstrates the accuracy of the predictions for skin sensitization made by the DEREK system and exemplifies the process by which the rulebase is undergoing continuous development in the light of new knowledge. The process is illustrated whereby specific compound data coupled with a thorough literature review of a chemical class can be used as the basis of a mechanistic hypothesis for toxicity. Following peer review by the DEREK collaborative group (using proprietary data where available), this leads to the development of new structure activity rules for the DEREK rulebase.

Although the data in the BgVV list are of good quality, they are limited by the fact that only positive data relating to skin sensitization are listed. Analysis of further high quality datasets, which consist of negative as well as positive skin sensitization data, is an essential part of the development process.

Analysis of datasets that contain only positive skin sensitization data requires consideration only of whether or not the chemicals have the potential to react with a contact allergens either directly or after appropriate skin metabolism. For datasets containing both positive and negative data, consideration of the physicochemical properties of the chemicals that influence partition either into the skin, or into biological compartments relevant for skin metabolism, is also required. Partition parameters assume a greater importance in evaluating skin sensitization data from protocols that employ only topical application of test chemicals (e.g., the mouse local lymph node assay and the human maximization test), than in procedures such as the guinea pig maximization test, which involve the use of subcutaneous injections with adjuvant. The structural alerts for skin sensitization contained in the DEREK system provide only information about the reactivity component of skin sensitization. The StAR system, currently under development by LHASA Limited, in addition to containing the functionality of DEREK, will also contain the tools necessary for analyzing the partition properties of chemicals.

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