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Hymenoptera stings - is it a bee or is it a wasp and why should we care?

Social vespid wasps, including the European wasp, are spreading dramatically throughout Australia, New Zealand and the United States. This is expected to result in increased wasp sting related morbidity and, potentially, mortality. The recent campaign in Australia to address the vespid public health burden, spearheaded by AVRU, will be outlined. It is apparent that the epidemiology and determinants of vespid related injury are poorly defined. The available data are limited by (i) disease coding methods and (ii) clinical challenges to distinguish between different hymenopteran stings. In the clinical environment wasps may frequently be mistaken for bees, and, possibly, wasps may cause more significant morbidity than bees. The combined bee and wasp sting fatality rate in Australia since 1981 of 0.15/10⁶ population/year compares with the recent US bee and wasp sting fatality rate of 0.18/10⁶/year. The relative current burdens due to bees versus wasps have not been determined. In the clinical paradigm, most serious reactions to wasp and bee stings are allergic reactions, with only a small percentage of the population at risk. However, individual wasps, in contrast to bees, can sting multiple times and a large number of stings can result in a life threatening envenomation. Hence, not only those with wasp allergy are at risk. Hospital bee and wasp sting surveillance data and some individual cases of bee and wasp stings will be presented. Clinical envenomation syndromes of bee and wasp attacks will be contrasted to distinguish allergic effects from the toxic effects of the two venoms. We shall highlight the need for interdisciplinary collaboration in clinical and entomological research to determine the optimal management of toxic effects of vespid envenomation and will emphasise the role of enhanced surveillance in vespid injury prevention and control.

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An illustrated guide to the common parasitic wasps associated with citrus scale insects and mealybugs in Australia - an outline of proposed work.

Over 40 species of wasp parasites, mainly of the families Encyrtidae and Aphelinidae, have been recorded as associated with scale insects and mealybugs on citrus in Australia. The present work is intended to provide a comprehensive resource guide for citrus IPM programs involving these parasites in Australia. The guide will include revised illustrated keys to species that exist in the Citrus Pests book, and detailed account on individual parasite species, comprising diagnostic characters, distributions, biological notes including host records, as well as notes on collection and preservation of specimens for identification. Further details will be discussed.

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