Yi and colleagues describe microscopic stellate structures on potassium hydroxide preparations of skin scrapings. They conclude that these stellate structures are plant-derived trichromes that may contaminate skin samples, and they cite our description of “floral-shaped fibers” similar in morphology to these stellate structures in skin samples from some patients with Morgellons disease. The implication is that the Morgellons skin samples were contaminated with plant fibers.

We were also concerned about possible plant fiber contamination in Morgellons skin samples shown in our early work, even though the fibers appeared to be anchored in skin. However, careful histological follow-up studies demonstrated conclusively that these stellate fibers were composed of the human biofilaments keratin and collagen and were definitely not plant-derived contaminants. (Figure 1) Furthermore, we have shown that these fibers originate in the stratum basale and stratum spinosum of Morgellons skin samples and could not be textile fibers or any other external contaminants. (Figure 2)

We agree with Yi and colleagues that care must be taken in evaluating microscopic structures that may turn out to be plant contaminants in skin samples. We are
equally concerned that human biofilaments in Morgellons skin samples should not be mistaken for plant contaminants based on preliminary observations and dermatological preconceptions. The reason that Morgellons biofilaments can mimic stellate plant fibers is yet another aspect of this mysterious dermopathy that merits further investigation.

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