

PESTILENT PARAQUAT- CURSE OF A FAMILY

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Introduction: Paraquat is a commonly used herbicide. Its poisoning remains a severe health problem globally and the degree of severity depends on the exposure route and dose. In general, oral ingestion is fatal as it is acutely toxic. Paraquat can also cause liquefaction necrosis through subcutaneous route which can lead to necrotising fasciitis as they migrate along tissue plane. However, there were also reports that paraquat only causes local lesions through exposure to healthy skin. Here we report 2 cases of necrotising fasciitis secondary to paraquat exposure in a family which ultimately resulted in the death of 2 cousins, in a span of 2 weeks.

Discussion: 57 years old gentleman with no known medical illness (Patient A) presented with 2 days history of left lower limb swelling with hemorrhagic blisters and necrotic patches after he was exposed to paraquat. 2 weeks later, his cousin, a 66 years old gentleman (Patient B) presented similarly with 3 days history of left lower limb swelling with hemorrhagic blisters and necrotic patches after he was exposed to the similar pesticide. Both of them had abrasion wounds on their left legs prior to the paraquat exposure but protective clothing and boots were not used during the spraying of pesticide. They presented similarly to emergency department in septic shock where they were treated for left lower limb necrotising fasciitis. Radiography for Patient A revealed gas shadow over the lower limb while Patient B exhibited crepitus upon examination of lower limb on admission. Antibiotic therapy was commenced immediately and urgent extensive wound debridement was carried out. Sadly, both of them succumbed to death during their hospital stay.

Conclusion: Paraquat is well absorbed through an injured skin and may result in severe toxicity even in a healthy person. Strict precautions and personal protective equipments should be recommended whenever paraquat is used.