

Methanol Poisoning in Bangladesh- A Deadly Case Series

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Abstract

Objective: Adulterated methanol is highly toxic and leads to severe metabolic acidosis and blindness and mortality is very high if not treated with specific antidote. The time of ingestions and severity of illness is very short and comprehensive quick assessment and care is crucial for survival of patient. The selective antidote Fomepizole is not available in Bangladesh and pure intravenous ethanol is also out of reach in health care facility. The oral ethanol has its legislative regulation. Occasional clusters of severe methanol poisoning leading to fatality has been observed in recent years in Bangladesh.

Methods: This is a Case series of 8 cases of adulterated methanol poisoning in a tertiary care hospital with lethality

Results: From November 2012 to January,2013, in sphere of 3 months medicine units of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) experienced 8 cases of methanol poisoning with fatality. Six patient presented in unconscious states within 3 to 7 hrs of consuming methanol while two patient presented within 48 hrs. All of them had gastrointestinal toxicity with variable episodes of vomiting. Three patients presented with visual impairment while only two out of eight had normal ophthalmoscopy. Respiratory distress was uniformly found in all patients before unstable profound shock. Blood ethanol level was not performed in any patient due to lack of available facility. Seven patients received only supportive measures ranging from steroids to sodium bi carbonate while one patient presented in severe toxicity and died quickly before any supportive measures. Antidote was not prescribed in any patient in the form of fomepizole or intravenous or oral ethanol

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Conclusions: Methanol poisoning is a severe form of poisoning and currently the physicians are not adequately trained enough to deal with quick assessment and prompt treatment in Bangladesh. The judicious use of antidote even in the form of oral ethanol and folinic acid can save the precious life. A national guideline should be uniformly practiced by the physicians to combat the catastrophic methanol poisoning in Bangladesh.

