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A fatal ackee (*Blighia sapida*) fruit toxicity: Case report from a Sri Lankan rural family.

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Aim and objectives: Ackee fruit (*Blighia sapida*) toxicity resulting in hypoglycemia, gastrointestinal symptoms, central nervous system depression and subsequent fatalities due to its constituent toxins, 'hypoglycin A and B', has been reported sporadically in global literature. The unripe fruit (aril, seeds and inedible parts) contain the toxin in high concentration. The ripe fruit which split open, contain much less toxin and is cooked and consumed in some countries. This case report represents consumption of unripe fruit leading to the fatal syndrome described above.

Methodology: This is the case report of a 68-year-old male and his 63-year-old wife who became severely ill following consumption of a curry made of unripe aril of ackee fruit (*B. sapida*). They have been found unresponsive for over 24 hours. The wife had episodes of vomiting but recovered with treatment. The man had vomiting, haematemesis, hypoglycaemia, seizures, and loss of consciousness. Despite supportive care including dextrose infusions, and subsequent intensive care, he succumbed to his illness 72 hours after the culprit meal. His medical history included chronic obstructive lung disease, hypertension, and stroke, but they remained under control. A dietary recall survey did not reveal consumption of other toxic substances.

Conclusions: The source of the fruit had been an ornamentally grown plant under the incorrect identity of 'Malaysian cashew'. Following the fatality, plant experts identified it as *B. sapida*. Enquiry noted that the unripe aril of the fruit had been consumed. The man developed a classically described clinical illness resembling Reye syndrome. Postmortem examination including toxicology did not reveal any alternative cause for the death. This is the first reported fatal case of ackee fruit poisoning in Sri Lanka. Public awareness about the toxicity of *B. sapida*, and correct harvesting of the ripe fruit is a timely need to prevent similar fatalities, as the plant must have reached wider geographical areas of the country.