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Paraquat poisoning, its clinical presentation and complications: A case series from a tertiary care hospital in Central India

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Background: Paraquat is a rapidly-acting, nonselective herbicide that is relatively inexpensive. Paraquat ingestion is becoming one of the a leading causes of fatal poisoning in many parts of the developing world. It acts by generation of superoxide free radicals and consumption of NADPH. It is lethal even in small dosages, and has multisystem clinical effects. Renal, hepatic, and pulmonary systems are most affected and mortality rates are high.

Aim and objectives: To evaluate clinical presentation, investigations, treatment, and outcome of patients with Paraquat poisoning admitted at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bhopal

Methodology: We searched admission registers in medical intensive care Unit and medical ward, to identify patients who had features of paraquat poisoning. We performed a chart review of these patients. We also obtained available post-mortem records of the patients from the department of forensic medicine

Results: A total of nine Cases of paraquat ingestion were admitted between January and December 2022. All nine cases had a mortality. The age range of these patients is from 18 to 42 years, and five of them were women. All the patients presented with oral ulcerations, oliguric acute kidney injury, and transaminitis. Most patients developed acute respiratory distress and lung fibrosis. Patients received hemodialysis, tracheostomy and mechanical ventilation during hospital stay. Total survival was between 3 and 21 days after paraquat ingestion. Postmortem findings of available cases were compatible with clinical presentation.

Conclusions: Paraquat poisoning is fatal, and has extensive multi-system involvement. Its management is challenging.