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AN ONLINE PLUMBISM

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Online e-commerce platforms have become an important source of poisoning with indigenous medication in India. We report the case of a 53-year-old lady who presented to the Emergency Department with a one-week history of nausea, abdominal pain and absolute constipation. She also had loss of appetite associated with generalized fatigue and weight loss of 5 kg. Initial clinical evaluation revealed a conscious, oriented, and afebrile patient with preserved vitals. The clinical examination revealed diffuse abdominal tenderness and hepato-splenomegaly. The blood investigations revealed anemia, indirect hyperbilirubinemia, marginally raised LDH (253U/L), neutrophilic leucocytosis, hyponatremia, and deranged liver enzymes. The iron profile revealed very high serum ferritin (1110.55ng/ml) and high serum B12 levels (1099pg/ml), high folic acid levels (17.91ng/ml). She was initiated on supportive measures while being under evaluation. The ultrasound abdomen revealed chronic liver disease and the neck revealed thyroiditis. CECT abdomen revealed nodular hepatomegaly and CLD. Peripheral smear was done given the hemolytic picture which showed dimorphic anemia with basophilic stippling in RBCs and neutrophilic leucocytosis. Hence serum Lead was sent. Echo revealed no significant abnormalities. Upper GI endoscopy revealed RUT positivity, lax LES, and pan gastritis, Colonoscopy revealed multiple small colonic polyps, hemorrhoids, and rectosigmoiditis. Alpha-fetoprotein was found to be high. Serum lead reports were found to be high (58.14µg/dl). Oral lead chelation therapy was initiated. Medical gastroenterology review was obtained and medications were optimized. She improved gradually with improvement in symptoms, normalizing blood counts, and stable vitals, hence discharged. She had a history of intake of an indigenous medication purchased online for Diabetics from one of the e-commerce platform.

Conclusions: Emergency physicians should keep a broad differential list including toxin ingestion for non specific abdominal pain patients presenting to the emergency department. Sale of indigenous medications without adequate studies and analysis of the constituents across e-commerce platforms should be brought under strict regulations to prevent recurrence of such instances in the future.