

SUICIDAL CYANIDE POISONING

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ABSTRACT

Cyanide poisoning though not common poison yet we come across it occasionally. Terrorist or militants, what so ever you may call them when get cornered by police and not ammunition is left with them after the encounter usually commit suicide by swallowing capsule containing cyanide. Some unique findings of two such cases are being reported in this paper.

KEY WORDS: Cyanide, Potassium Cyanide Poisoning

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To commit suicide one likes to consume a poison in which death will be quick ¹ so that pain and sufferings caused by the poison are minimum. Though opium and barbiturates are ideal poisons to commit suicide ² but time between taking the poison and death is sufficient in such cases. In cyanide, poisoning fatal period is less ³ but it is not easily available. Terrorists are usually an organistaional background and cyanide is provided to them in the form of capsules so that if they are cornered or are unable to bear the torture they can consume this and die. This capsule is in the form of small glass tube sealed at both ends whenever such person wants to commit suicide they crush the capsule and are usually found dead before any treatment can be given.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

These are two cases brought to mortuary for post mortem examination at Govt. Medical College, Amritsar.

OBSERVATIONS

In such cases, post mortem staining is of pinkish colour and blood stained froth oozes from mouth and nostrils. On examination of lips and tongue, small cuts are seen on the mucosal side of the lips and on tongue. Stomach shows marked submucosal haemorrhages and small glass picces were recovered from the stomach. Blood is usually bright in colour. Cut surface of the lungs shows bloodstained froth. Various internal organs show a lot of congestion.

On histopathological examination: Lungs showed oedema and congestion. Liver depicted fatty changes and myocardium also had congestion.

DISCUSSION

Here we will like to emphasis that whenever there is allegation suicide by cyanide poisoning we must look for cuts in mouth, which remain unnoticed until we particularly look for them. Even before chemical examination report we can have some idea that poisoning may be by cyanide and its probability still increases if we find small glass pieces in the stomach which we do not find in any other poison to the best of our knowledge and it definitely gives the particular clue regarding cyanide poisoning. Blood is usually bright in colour in such cases because oxygen in the blood can not be utilised by the cells due to cytochrome-oxidase inhibitory action⁴. All other findings can be explained by histotoxic anoxia. Of course, chemical examiner report will prove the cyanide poisoning.

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