Suicidal Ingestion of Henna Mixed With Para-Phenylenediamine: A Case Report

Gözde Bumin Aydın*, Kadiyre Kahveci, Dilşen Örnek, İlhami Demirkapu and Gültün Özgün

Ministry of Health Etilk Education and Research Hospital Department of Anesthesiology and Reanimation, Turkey

Abstract

Henna, an extract of the plant Lawsonia, has been used for centuries in many cultures, mainly as a dye for hair and nails as well as for decorative body painting [1]. Applying to the soles and palms and using it as a red hair dye is a popular custom in some of the east African countries, Middle East and in the Indian subcontinent. Para-Phenylenediamine (PPD), a derivative of para-nitroaniline is widely used in hair dye formulations, in dyeing furs and in photochemical industries [2]. It has also been used to intensify the color of henna and to accelerate the dyeing process. Local application of PPD in susceptible individuals may result in dermatitis, asthma, arthritis, lacrimation, exophthalmos or even permanent blindness when applied to the eyes [3]. Oral ingestion of PPD results in severe edema of face, tongue, neck and laryngeal edema with respiratory distress often requiring emergency tracheostomy [4]. Ingestion of Lawsonia containing PPD has a high mortality rate (up to 31%) owing to rhabdomyolysis and renal failure [5]. We present a patient of systemic PPD poisoning with suicidal intent.

Keywords: Para-phenylenediamine poisoning, Angioneurotic edema, Rhabdomyolysis, Henna

Introduction

Henna, an extract of the plant Lawsonia, has been used for centuries in many cultures, mainly as a dye for hair and nails as well as for decorative body painting [1]. Applying to the soles and palms and using it as a red hair dye is a popular custom in some of the east African countries, Middle East and in the Indian subcontinent. Para-Phenylenediamine (PPD), a derivative of para-nitroaniline is widely used in hair dye formulations, in dyeing furs and in photochemical industries [2]. It has also been used to intensify the color of henna and to accelerate the dyeing process. Local application of PPD in susceptible individuals may result in dermatitis, asthma, arthritis, lacrimation, exophthalmos or even permanent blindness when applied to the eyes [3]. Oral ingestion of PPD results in severe edema of face, tongue, neck and laryngeal edema with respiratory distress often requiring emergency tracheostomy [4]. Ingestion of Lawsonia containing PPD has a high mortality rate (up to 31%) owing to rhabdomyolysis and renal failure [5]. We present a patient of systemic PPD poisoning with suicidal intent.

Case Presentation

A healthy 29 year old female was brought to the emergency department 20 hours after ingestion of henna. She ingested four spoonfuls of henna for suicidal intent. In the patients history, there was nothing remarkable. On admission she presented with nausea, dizziness, lightheadness, blurred vision, retrosternal pain but no vomiting. On examination, she was conscious, oriented and with pulse 68/min and blood pressure 134/91 mmHg, respiratory rate 12/min and with electrogram within normal limits. She did not have any cyanosis nor respiratory problems. On cardiovascular, respiratory and rest of the nervous system examination pulmonary congestion, and no enlargement of liver or spleen also her prodromotic time (PT) and partial thromboplastin time were normal. She had no signs of acute oliguric renal failure following PPD intoxication [10]. This was also with angioneurotic edema and respiratory distress, rhabdomyolysis and acute renal failure [4]. Ingestion of PPD two types of effects. First one appears shortly after ingestion and consists of vomiting, edema of face, larynx and upper airways that may be requiring tracheostomy [4]. The second one appears later in which patients consumed 3 grams of PPD, it includes stiffness and pain in the limbs, rhabdomyolysis and passage of chocolate brown colored urine culminating in acute oliguric renal failure. In Hashim et al’s study 5 children required peritoneal

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dialysis [8]. Dosage is highly related with toxicity of PPD. Ingestion of 7-10 grams might be lethal while higher doses are related with rhabdomyolysis and acute renal failure [8]. Plasma exchange has been reported to be used to treat lawsonia henna ingestion [5], as well another drugs and toxins. Less reported features were liver failure, drowsiness, altered sensorium, gastrointestinal symptoms, neuropathy, chronic renal failure [2]. PPD is also a potent sensitizer causing eczematous dermatitis which may be severe as erythematoumultiforme like eruptions and there are also several reports mentioning the contact dermatitis of childhood from henna tattoo [1,11,12]. Probably our patient consumed low dose of PPD as it did not cause severe symptoms like angioneurotic edema, renal failure, respiratory distress and rhabdomyolysis so we treated our patient supportively.

Early treatment in PPD toxicity includes gastric lavage. Patients should be monitored for respiratory distress and endotracheal intubation has to be performed early if laryngeal edema develops. Metabolic acidosis has to be corrected, alkaline diuresis should be generated.

All modalities of dialysis hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis and continuous renal replacement therapy have been found to be useful in acute renal failure. Lawsonia should be added to the list of toxicities needing urgent treatment mostly in Middle East countries and India. Rhabdomyolysis developing acute renal failure and stridor due to upper airway edema should remind us PPD intoxication.

References