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Effects of Ricinus Communis Poisoning

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Ricinus communis is a medical plant. Extracts from the seeds are used as a purgative and extracts from the leaves used as external applicants for joint pain in Ayurvedic medicine. Ricinoleic acid is a component of these extracts which is very toxic but poorly absorbed through the gastro intestinal tract. This is a descriptive study of the effects in patients who accidentally ingested seeds of ricinus comminus and admitted to Teaching hospital Jaffna

All the patients who were admitted to the Jaffna teaching hospital on 10th & 11th of June 2008 with the history of injection of Ricinus comminus seeds were included in the study. Data were collected with the B.H.Ts & direct interview from the patients & their parents. Collected data were analyzed manually. There were 26 patients who consumed accidentally the seeds from the nearby tree. All of them were between 02 to 17 years. Nine of them {35%} had symptoms. Patients who had part of a seed developed no symptom. Among those who consumed one seed two of them developed symptom. Rest of the people who developed symptoms had ingested more than one seeds [27%]. A thirteen year boy who consumed ten seeds developed giddiness vomiting and severe abdominal pain. The common symptoms noticed were vomiting {100 %}, Giddiness {36%}, Abdominal pain {56%} and none had diarrhea. The time lapse between ingestion of the seeds and development of the first symptom varied from half an hour to four hour. None of them had the symptom more than twenty four hours.

Although the literature mentions the development of diarrhea, convulsion & death in Ricinus poisoning especially in inhalation or in injection but *none of our* patients developed these effects. Most of the patients developed symptoms when they consumed more than one seed. They started to develop symptoms between half an hour to four hours after ingestion but symptoms did not persist more than twenty four hours. Development of symptom and its severity are related to the ingested number of seeds. People who had the history of more than one seed ingestion should be monitored for symptoms at least for four hours and who have symptoms should be treated for at least twenty four hours.

Key words : Ricinus communis, poisoning, medical plants, seeds, Ayurvedic medicine