

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS SYMPTOMS AFTER SNAKE BITE (A CASE SERIES)

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Introduction: Any overwhelming life experience can trigger post traumatic stress symptoms, especially if the event feels unpredictable and uncontrollable. Although the availability of antivenom at primary health-care centers and rapid transportation facilities may change the morbidity associated with snake bites, but it can not influence psychiatric effects of this stress.

Objective: In this study, we evaluated post traumatic stress symptoms related to snake bites. We attempted to describe the post traumatic stress symptoms of venomous snake bites in east of Iran, Khorasan province.

Method: We evaluated 41 patients referring to toxicology ward of Imam Reza Hospital in Mashhad, complaining from snake bite. We have assessed post traumatic stress symptoms in these patients in the first day, 4 weeks, 6 weeks and 6 months after snake bite, by using SCID1 questionnaire for PTSD symptoms. The questionnaires were completed by a psychiatrist each session.

Results: According to DSM-IV criteria, PTSD has three clusters of symptoms, consisting of: reexperience, avoidance and hyperarousal. In our study, after 4 weeks, 32 patients had symptoms of "reexperience", 34 experienced symptoms of "avoidance" and 17 had symptoms of "hyperarousal". After 6 weeks, 26 had symptoms of "reexperience", 28 symptoms of "avoidance" and 9 patients had "hyperarousal" symptoms, and after 6 months from snake bite 11 patients had symptoms of "reexperience", 15 symptoms of "hyperarousal" and 2 patients experienced "hyperarousal" symptoms. Among all patients only 10 patients experienced full criteria symptoms of PTSD according DSM-IV criteria.

Conclusion: Snake bites causes significant post stress symptoms, a complication not previously documented. It is better to refer any suspected patients to psychiatric specialist for better evaluation and treatment. These symptoms need further investigation.

