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CHANGING PATTERNS OF POISONING INCIDENCE FROM SILVER JEWELRY CLEANING AGENTS AT THE PHILIPPINE GENERAL HOSPITAL, METRO MANILA

LR Panganiban

National Poison Management & Control Center, University of the Philippines College of Medicine, Philippine General Hospital, Philippines

Objectives: The National Poison Management & Control Center (NPMCC) has observed the rise in poisoning incidence from silver jewelry cleaners since 2004-2010 with an average case fatality rate of 15.3 from 2004-2006. The high fatality rate was due to the presence of cyanide in these cleaning agents. Such observation has prompted the NPMCC to institute several interventions to address this problem. This study aims to describe the patterns of poisoning from silver jewelry cleaners and to identify the factors affecting these patterns in a tertiary hospital in Metro Manila.

Methods: This was a retrospective study of poisoning cases from silver jewelry cleaners admitted at the Philippine General Hospital and managed by NPMCC from 2004-2011. Patient records were reviewed and the following data were gathered: age, gender, type of agent, circumstance and outcome.

Results: Only patient records from 2004-2006 and 2009-2011 were available for review. There were 71 patients admitted in 2004-2006 and 403 in 2009-2011. Majority of the patients were females and mostly in the pediatric age group. However, there were more patients with ages 1-5 years old (26.8%) in 2004-2006 and more among the late adolescent age group (31.5%) in 2009-2011. There were also more adult patients attended in 2009-2011. The type of agent in silver jewelry cleaners in 2004-2006 was mostly cyanide salt whereas in 2009-2011, there were more that contained thiourea and other unspecified agents. There was also note of changes in the circumstances of poisoning, in that, majority of cases (88.9%) in 2004-2006 was accidental in nature. Whereas, in 2009-2011, most cases (85.4%) were non-accidental. Majority of patients were discharged improved. However, the case fatality rates in 2004-2006 and 2009-2011 were 6.9% and 3.7%, respectively. The factors that may have influenced the changing patterns of poisoning from silver jewelry cleaners were the conduct of tri-media campaigns, issuance of ban order of cyanide in silver jewelry cleaners, monitoring of stalls selling the agents, availability of treatment guidelines and antidotes.

Conclusions: Incidence of poisoning from silver jewelry cleaners has been increasing through the past 8 years. However, because of interventions, vulnerable groups (infants to young children) were protected and case fatality rate has gone down. It is recommended that the campaign against and the monitoring of the use of cyanide in silver jewelry be continued and strengthened.