

Oral Abstracts

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REVIEWING A CHEMICAL WARFARE ATTACK TRAGEDY: LESSONS LEARNT

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Objectives: To review a chemical warfare attack to civilians, and chemical emergency response including awareness, preparedness and management in poor resource area.

Methods: Halabja a Kurdish town in Iraq is reviewed in a chemical attack. The weaknesses of preparedness and management are presented through a photo series of incidents have taken place.

Results: Chemical agents are classified according to how they affect and traditionally including nerve, blood, choking, blister and incapacitating agents.

Although chemical weapons usually are designed more to injury than to kill but they can cause a mass casualty that may spread through secondary contamination particularly if it has potential to affect large populations.

There might be visible evidence of a release, such as explosion or notification of less evident environmental changes such as dirty surface water, specific odors, colorful steam or clouds, death or injury of wildlife or irritation of the eyes, nose or effects on other organs.

Conclusion: Probably most of us are not ready for a terrorist chemical attack. Early spot decontamination within minutes can save lives and greatly reduce injury. Later decontamination at the decontamination facilities serves to further protect the patient, health care workers, and medical treatment area. Timely physical removal of chemical warfare or hazardous materials is always the first priority. For large scale incidents, water or soap and water, if readily available, are as good as anything for decontamination.

Once a chemical attack is detected, trained authorities may able to respond appropriately, evaluate risks to public health, and implement other appropriate actions based on established guidelines and procedures.

Learning Objective 1	Gain a perspective of the chemical warfare agents
Learning Objective 2	Be familiar with typical chemical warfare attacks in the field
Learning Objective 3	Become aware of the most common presentations of these toxicities
Learning Objective 4	Be able to imagine how to manage such patients and protect yourself