

'Prinso' poisoning in the southern province of Sri Lanka.

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Introduction: Deliberate ingestion of seemingly innocuous household products is common in rural areas of the southern province of Sri Lanka. The washing powder 'Prinso' is manufactured by small scale entrepreneurs and consists of 2 sachets, one containing 0.5-1g of potassium permanganate and the other 8- 10g of oxalic acid. Both have corrosive effects on the GI system. Methaemoglobinaemia and/or hypocalcaemia with acute renal failure may develop in severely intoxicated patients (1). 'Prinso' poisoning is common around the city of Galle. A substantial number are believed to die before admission to primary health care centres (DMO district hospital, personal communication). 25 'Prinso' poisoning cases were admitted to Teaching Hospital Karapitiya between November 2006 and September 2007. 2 patients died (case fatality ratio 8%; 9 were transfers from surrounding rural hospitals). **Objectives:** To document clinical and biochemical features of potassium permanganate and oxalic acid poisoning. **Case series:** Data from 15 patients following 'Prinso' poisoning were collected from May to September 2007. The male: female ratio was 1:2. Fourteen patients had deliberately ingested the poison and were aged 15-30 years. The common presenting symptoms were mild to moderate gastro intestinal symptoms. Three patients had a low urine output with raised blood pressure and correspondingly high concentrations of serum creatinine. Red blood cells and calcium oxalate crystals were noted in the urine of 5 and 1 patient respectively. One patient died (case fatality 6.6%) after ingestion of 86 tablets of chlorpheniramine together with 10g of oxalic acid. He died after delayed admission before any definitive treatment could be instituted. Of the remaining 14 patients, 3 were treated for methaemoglobinaemia with the antidote methylene blue, 2 for hypocalcaemia with calcium supplements (both before symptoms occurred) and 3 did not require any treatment. **Conclusion:** The readily available household product 'Prinso' has come to recognition in the array of poisons responsible for deliberate self poisoning among young with a striking gender difference of twice as many females ingesting it in the southern province of Sri Lanka. The main toxic features were related to its corrosive action on the gastro intestinal tract, renal toxicity and methaemoglobinaemia. Raised serum creatinine concentrations were helpful in the detection of renal damage. Methaemoglobinaemia was detected on clinical grounds. **References:** 1. Kent RO, Ilene BA, Neal LB et al. *Poisoning & drug overdose*. 5th ed. San Francisco, USA: McGraw-Hill Companies, 2007: 110-11,158,296-7.