

Puffer Fish Poisoning from Illicit Fish Trading in Bangkok, Thailand

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Background: Many species of marine puffer fish contained tetrodotoxin (TTX). Ingestion of these fish leads to muscle paralysis and even death in severe cases. Recently there have been about 75 tons of puffer fish meat illegally streamed into fish market of Thailand everyday. They were sold as sliced fish in the names of other fish. Many consumers take puffer fish without recognition. **Objective:** To report the recent incidents of puffer fish poisoning in Bangkok. **Case series:** From June to August 2007, we found eight patients with clinical compatible with tetrodotoxin intoxication in King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital. Three, one and four cases were distributed among three incidents. All cases had the history of eating and buying food contain sliced fish from food vendors. Later the authorities identified the fish in the first and third incidents to be puffer fish. The cases were 2 males and 6 females, aged from 20 to 55. One patient, a 50-year-old female, had ventilatory failure and needed ventilatory support. Another patient, a 21-year-old female, complained of difficulty of walking and had grade III-IV/V generalized muscle weakness. The others had minor symptoms such as numbness, dizziness, nausea and vomiting. Five cases needed hospitalization. All patients recovered uneventfully within 24-48 hours of supportive treatment. **Conclusion:** Eight patients with puffer fish poisoning were reported in our hospital in a span of less than three months. They had good clinical outcome though one case could be fatal if prompt treatment had not been given. Due to the large amount of illicit puffer fish trading, more cases are expected. Laws enforcement and public acknowledgement are mandatory. **References:** 1. Baden D, Fleming LE, Bean JA. Handbook of Clinical Neurology. FA deWolff (Ed). Amsterdam: Elsevier Press, 1995:141-175. 2. Samitsuwan P, Sermkaew T, Laosiritaworn Y. An Outbreak of Tetrodotoxin Poisoning Associated with Puffer Fishes in Bangkok, Thailand, 2002. Journal of Health Science 2005;14:203-8.