

AN ATTEMPTED HOMICIDE WITH METALLIC MERCURY

Introduction

Homicide by exotic poisoning continues to be common in India. The current paper describes a case of attempted homicide with metallic mercury.

Case Report

A 35 year old married lady was administered metallic mercury in milk by her husband in order to kill her. Immediately after consuming the milk, the lady started feeling unwell and reported at the Emergency department of Lok Nayak Hospital, New Delhi. On examination, the patient was found normal. All her vitals were normal. She was referred to Medical Toxicology ward for more detailed examination.

Remaining portion of milk was sent to Forensic Science Laboratory for chemical analysis. The analysis reported that metallic mercury was present in the milk.

It is known that metallic mercury may kill, but it is rare, because the metal is not easily absorbed through the stomach wall. However if it is converted to its salts, say mercuric chloride, by the stomach juices, then it may kill. In the current case, the victim survived.

The husband nevertheless was booked under a section related to “attempted homicide”. This section was imposed after the doctor opined that metallic mercury can kill a human being.

Discussion

The paper discusses the medico legal aspects of mercury poisoning and a review of literature.