

An Outbreak of Foxglove Leaves Poisoning

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Introduction: Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) leaves resemble those of foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) when the plant is not in bloom, therefore cardiac glycoside poisoning may occur when people confuse foxglove with comfrey. **Case report:** We reported an outbreak of foxglove leaves poisoning following the use of alleged “comfrey” herbal tea. Nine patients were involved and initially presented with nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and dizziness. Significant cardiotoxicity developed later among three patients who also had mild hyperkalemia. Peak serum digoxin concentration measured by immunoassay was elevated in all patients and ranged from 4.4 to 139.5 ng/ml. Patients with severe cardiotoxicity were treated with temporary cardiac pacing. Moreover, 40 to 80 mg of digoxin-specific antibody therapy was given without any effect. All patients recovered uneventfully. **Discussion:** Our report highlighted the potential risk of misidentification of herbs, in this case *Digitalis purpurea* for *Symphytum officinale*. Physician should be aware that cardiac glycoside poisoning could arise from such misidentification. Public education about the toxicity of *Digitalis purpurea* poisoning may reduce the risk of misidentification and subsequent poisoning.