

## **A case series of envenoming by Saw-scaled viper (*Echis carinatus*) in Sri Lanka**

**Gnanathan C A<sup>1</sup>, Rodrigo C<sup>1</sup>, Peranantharajah S<sup>2</sup>, Anitha Coonghe<sup>3</sup>, Pieris P<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, No 25 Kynsey road, Colombo 08, Sri Lanka, email ariarane2000@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup>Teaching Hospital, Jaffna, Sri Lanka

<sup>3</sup>District Hospital, Mannar, Sri Lanka

<sup>4</sup>Zoological garden, Dehiwela, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

### **Background**

Saw-scaled viper (*Echis carinatus*) is considered one of the highly venomous snakes in the world. The habitat of these snakes is restricted to dry and semi arid zones of the country making it the least reported venomous snakebite in Sri Lanka. Despite being termed one of the venomous snakes in the island, the clinical profile of saw- scaled viper bites has not been well established. This fact highlights the importance of a case series of saw-scaled viper bites.

### **Methodology**

We report a series of 45 patients of Saw-scaled viper bites from Jaffna and Mannar hospitals of Northern Province of Sri Lanka. All patients who brought the snake to the hospital were included in the study and their demographical data, clinical symptoms and response to antivenom was recorded after informed consent.

### **Results**

There were a total of 45 patients in the series with 30 cases reported from Mannar and 15 from Jaffna. Of the total series 34 (75.5%) were males and 11(24.5%) were females. Most patients were within 10 – 19 years of age. None of the patients had neurological manifestations or renal failure. Local swelling was seen in 28 patients, which accounted for 62.2% of total patients. Eleven patients had spontaneous bleeding. However twenty minutes whole blood clotting test (20WBCT) showed incoagulable blood in 34 (75%) patients. All patients except two with a positive 20WBCT were given antivenom. No deaths were reported from either hospital.

### **Discussion**

This is the first authentic case series reported from Sri Lanka involving a large number of identified saw-scaled viper bites. It showed that the clinical profile of saw-scaled viper envenoming is restricted to local swelling and haematological manifestations including a incoagulable blood shown by 20WBCT. Though described as a highly venomous snake world wide, no deaths were reported in our series. Such attributions based on the venom profile and clinical features of Saw-scaled viper envenoming in other countries may not be applicable to the Sri Lankan species which may be geographically and genetically different. Further laboratory studies are required to identify the venom components and genetic profile of the Sri Lankan Saw-scaled viper.