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[Poisonous plants: An ongoing problem.]

[Article in Spanish]

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: A medical visit for plant ingestion is rare in the pediatric emergency services but may involve a high toxicity. The botanical toxicology training of health staff is often very limited, and it can be difficult to make a diagnosis or decide on the appropriate treatment.

OBJECTIVE: To study the epidemiological and clinical characteristics of poisoning due to plant ingestion in order to increase the knowledge of the health professional.

MATERIAL AND METHODS: A descriptive retrospective study was conducted on patients seen in a pediatric emergency department after the ingestion of plant substances from January 2008 to December 2012.

RESULTS: During the period of study, 18 patients had ingested possible toxic plants. In 14 cases, it was considered to be potentially toxic: broom, oleander, mistletoe, butcher's-broom, and vulgar bean (2), Jerusalem tomato, castor (2), Jimson weed, potus, marijuana, and mushrooms with digestive toxicity (2). Among the potentially toxic cases, the ingestion was accidental in 10 patients, 2 cases were classed as infantile mistreatment, 1 case had recreational intention, and another one suicidal intentions. The ingestion of oleander, castor and Jimson weed had major toxicity.

CONCLUSIONS: The potential gravity of the ingestion of plant substances and the variety of the exposure mechanism requires the pediatrician to bear in mind this possibility, and to be prepared for its diagnosis and management. Specific preventive information measures need to be designed for the families and for the regulation of toxic plants in playgrounds.

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KEYWORDS: Children; Intoxicación por plantas; Niños; Plant poisoning; Plantas tóxicas; Toxic plants; Vegetables; Vegetales

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