EDITORIAL

An overview of recent advancements in pediatric toxicology

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ABSTRACT

Ingestion of a conceivably poisonous agent, either as the result of the innocent behavior of a toddler or the action of a miserable adolescent, is a common problem seen in the emergency department. Presentation of poisoned patients to the emergency department insists prompt action to prevent poisoning by using Gastrointestinal (GI) decontamination or to treat poisoning with supportive care and, for a few poisons, antidotes. Gastrointestinal decontamination has been argumentative over the past decade, but a consensus is evolving, in large part.

Keywords: Gastrointestinal; Gastric lavage; Whole bowel irrigation

DESCRIPTION

Preventing the involvement of ingested poisons is a cardinal principle in the management of poisoned patients. The desired outcome is the precaution of symptoms and signs of poisoning. This involvement is unlikely to alter the clinical course in symptomatic patients. An organized approach to GI decontamination evolved over the mid-portion of this century and remained the standard of care for several decades. This included a so-called "gastric-emptying procedure" as the initial mediation, followed by the adsorption of residual poison within the gut to non-absorbable agents. The preferred gastric-emptying procedure was either ipecac-induced vomiting or gastric lavage, and the adsorptive agent of choice was activated charcoal. A cathartic, such as sorbitol, was routinely recommended to quicken the excretion of the charcoal.

No evidence of patient benefit from this technique has been found. This is not surprising because it developed before the era of evidence-based medicine, but the notion that intercepting the absorption of poisons from the gut into the bloodstream is beneficial for patients makes a lot of sense. And, instantly, procedures grouped under the term GI decontamination achieve that end.

Over the next 5 to 10 years, several studies that eventually changed practice were published. The most significant studies were of two types: controlled, crossover, human volunteer poison-marker models and randomized, controlled trials.

Human volunteer studies show that between 21% and 38% of the ingested poisonous drug is bringing out from the stomach if ipecac is administered 1 hour after ingestion. At best, this is an adequate result, and patients generally present to the emergency department 2 or 3 hours after ingestion. Four clinical studies were cited in the position statement.

Because of the unconvincing performance in the human volunteer studies and the failure to explain benefit in the clinical studies, the AACT and EAPCCT concluded that the"administration of ipecac in the emergency department should be abandoned."

Gastric lavage should not be used regularly in the management of poisoned patients. In experimental studies, the amount of marker separated by gastric lavage was highly variable and decreased with time. There is no certain proof that its use improves clinical outcome and it may cause significant morbidity.

Single-dose activated charcoal should not be administered generally in the management of poisoned patients. Based on volunteer studies, the advantage of activated charcoal diminishes with time; the greatest benefit is within one hour of ingestion.

The management of a cathartic alone has no role in the management of the poisoned patient and is not suggested as a method of gut decontamination. Based on available data, the routine use of a cathartic in combination with activated charcoal is not endorsed.

Whole Bowel Irrigation (WBI) should not be used regularly in the management of poisoned patients. Although some volunteer studies have shown major decreases in the bioavailability of ingested drugs, no controlled clinical trials have been performed and there is no convincing evidence that WBI improves the outcome of poisoned patients.

After considering whether GI decontamination is stipulated, the emergency department management is focused on blood-sugar homeostasis. Parenteral dextrose should be regulate only to patients with hypoglycemia. Prophylactic parenteral dextrose convolute and prolongs management, specifically for patients who are subsequently found to have mild poisoning. Physicians should take action immediately to octreotide in all patients who remain hypoglycemic after receiving a l.0 g/kg dose of dextrose.

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