

Alert on herbal medicine poisoning

The Department of Health (DH) has recently received notification of a confirmed case of aconitum alkaloid poisoning relating to the consumption of Chinese herbs prescribed by a Chinese medicine practitioner (CMP) in the Mainland. The herbs were purchased in the Mainland and the decoction was prepared by the patient. The patient was subsequently admitted to a local public hospital due to lip and tongue numbness, four limbs numbness, weakness and dizziness. He was subsequently discharged home after treatment.

The Hospital Authority's laboratory results today (November 12) revealed aconitum alkaloids including Yunaconitine and Crassicauline A in patient's urine sample and the herbal remnant. The formula comprised 9 Chinese herbs which, according to the literature, should not contain Yunaconitine and Crassicauline A. Moreover, the dosage of processed Radix Aconiti Kusnezoffii was 10g, which was about 3 times the upper limit of the dosage recommended by the Pharmacopoeia of the People's Republic of China 2010. It appears that the likely contributing factors for this case are contamination of the Chinese herbs by yunaconitine, crassicauline A and overdose of processed Radix Aconiti Kusnezoffii.

People may patronise CMP in the Mainland for health maintenance or treatment of illnesses. DH advises members of the public to consult reputable and qualified CMPs in the Mainland. Moreover, the Chinese medicines should be purchased from reliable retailers only. To protect your health, never consult unqualified CMP nor purchase any Chinese medicines from unknown sources.

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