Sea Anemone Envenomation on The French Atlantic Coast

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Envenomations by cnidarians have been a recurring problem since 2008 (1). Data from Bordeaux PCC indicates envenomations primarily by stinging medusa jellyfish. However other cnidarians present on the coast can generate relatively severe poisoning, including in children.

Case Report

A 2-year-old girl (10 kg) was playing without a swim suit on the beach at low tide at the Bay of Arcachon and accidentally sat on a sea anemone. The exact species could not be identified by the parents.

The child immediately suffered very intense pain, with crying and restlessness, together with skin lesions over of very large area of her buttocks, requiring hospital care. The perineum was unscathed.

She returned home with antihistamine and analgesic treatment. Forty-eight hours later, the lesions turned red, were oozing and extremely itchy, and were accompanied by a fever of 38.5°C. Other remote maculopapular lesions appeared over the entire posterior surface of the thorax. The child was put on prednisolone 1mg/kg for 15 days. The lesions gradually disappeared, but dark red marks were still clearly visible three months later.

Discussion

Several species of sea anemone live on the Atlantic seaboard: Anemone viridis, Corinactys viridis, Urticina felina, Actinothoe sphyrodetra. They all have a typical venomous harpoon-like cnidian device with a venom protein that shows an effect on potassium channels. Based on the size of the animal and the description given by the parents, Anemone sulcata is suspected in the above case report.

 Clinically, there is instantaneous damage to skin in direct contact with the tentacles. These lesions are painful and severe. However, we also find lesions appearing after a considerable delay. These delayed lesions are very itchy but NFS, CPK, creatinine, total lgE and tryptase are normal. We have no explanation for these delayed lesions. This clinical aspect has already been reported with envenomation by Physalia physalis (1).

Conclusion

Sea Anemone envenomation with severe lesions has never previously been reported in France on the Aquitaine coast, although an earlier series of cases was reported on the Adriatic sea (2).


Aknowledgments : AUBY J., French Research Institute for the Sea, IFREMER, Arcachon, France
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