

Case Report

A bizarre case report of self-harm by ingested lock trapped in oropharynx

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Received: 18 February 2015

Accepted: 08 March 2015

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ABSTRACT

The present case report deals with a highly and yet unreported case of self-harm in which a medium sized lock was ingested with convulsive movements of the face and neck which ultimately got trapped in oropharyngeal region. The lock managed to 'sink' and settled down in that region so that the patient did not feel any gross pain once it was swallowed. There was history of mental illness reported by the attendants of the patient that remained unverified since no treatment card or the name of drug(s) was shown to the treating team of doctors. Therefore, it remained speculative whether the attempt to swallow lock was as a result of psychiatric illness or was supplemented by other social factor notable the influence of "Tantrik". Tantriks are special breed of spiritual healers who resorted to unscientific method of healing. At times they use unethical practices. There are reports in which tantrik have provoked their unsuspecting victims to highly complex maneuvers leading to self-harm. The present case, it is believed falls in this category.

Keywords: Ingested lock, Self-harm, Bruised oropharynx, Mental illness, Tantrik, Bizarre behavior

INTRODUCTION

Most of the time victims of foreign body ingestion are toothless adults, prisoners and psychiatric patients. Commonly ingested objects are toothbrushes,¹ table spoons,² coin,³ bone piece, fish, nails, button, glass pieces, dentures, ear ring, chain, pins, needles and razor blades.⁴⁻⁷ In another significant study it has been reported that most ingested foreign bodies don't get impacted in oropharynx except fish, chicken bones or any other sharp or irregular object.⁷ These patients with foreign body in oropharynx generally present in emergency department with complain of sudden onset of dysphasia and pain in throat associated with minor laceration and abrasion in the oral cavity.

On many occasions ingestion of foreign bodies have been reported in various scientific publications and their variety never ceases to titillate. Present case report is very

interesting and has not been reported elsewhere and is novel in character.

CASE REPORT

A woman of around 25 years of age, married, multipara, was brought to the emergency section of JNMC and hospital, AMU, Aligarh, in the month of August 2014. She was acutely dysphasic and dyspneic. She was unable to swallow saliva and sips of water. She was partly stuporous, restless and was unable to talk. She was avoiding direct eye communication.

She was accompanied by her parents and few relatives. No member of her in laws accompanied her.

Initially, her parents were evasive and avoided direct questioning. They gave controlled answers in monosyllables. However, upon persistent questioning,

they gave a history of swallowing of a metallic object by her daughter. They also confided that she used to meet regularly a local “Tantrik” who assured her that she was “Possessed” by a demon.

Physical examination

She was dyspneic but not cyanosed and well oriented in time, place and person.

Vitals: Blood pressure - 178/82 mmHg, Pulse rate - 78/minute, regular, Respiratory rate - 22/minute, Temperature - Afebrile.

Investigation done

Since the patient was having pain in the throat, therefore emergency X-ray of neck in antero-posterior and lateral views were done. The result was made available within 10-15 minutes.

Details of case report

The treating team of doctors was aghast on seeing the X-ray. A metallic lock was found firmly lodged in the posterior oropharynx. Further visual examination of oropharynx by using tongue depressor revealed a medium sized lock made of steel. It was immovable, slimy and blood tainted.



Figure 1: Scanned picture of X-ray film in antero-posterior and lateral views of the patient revealed lock in the oropharyngeal region at C4-C5 level.

The patient was immediately operated under GA by using hand maneuvers with the help of instruments like sponge holding forceps and vulsellum forceps. In addition an ET tube was placed to ensure continuous air supply. The lock of dimension (5.5 cm x 3.5 cm x 1 cm) was recovered by the surgery team (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Surgical instruments used to recover lock by manual maneuver.

The patient has led a satiable life with a loving husband, regular income and supportive family. Apparently, she had nothing to worry about. However, a stark reality revealed by her family members concerned her pathological behavior. The husband told the team of doctors that the patient use to converse with ‘MATA JI’. This was a clear case of hallucination which the family members were unable to appreciate. They attributed her behavior to super natural power which they thought resided in her. To strengthen their statement of super natural prowess, they stated that she use to lift cycle with one finger. A stage came when the family members believed in gigantic prowess. Ironically, this statement remained unproven. They gave the impression that they were not averse of utilizing this factor for material gain.

DISCUSSION

There have been other incidences of bizarre nature in which pharyngeal injury was reported to have been caused by swallowed tooth brush and unusual rhino pharyngeal foreign body was detected in a patient who had swallowed long sewing needles into right nasal cavity during a magical act; pica - compulsive ingestion of nonfood particle - in the shape of multiple foreign bodies was detected in stomach in a psychiatric patient and one who had swallowed a large paper towel which was later vomited out on its own.⁸

CONCLUSION

There have been innumerable cases highlighting the bizarre manifestation of psychiatric illnesses in terms of self-mutilation and self-destruction displaying abnormal behavior. The present case merits attention because the object used for ingestion was a lock which ultimately got impacted in oropharynx. The patient was, no doubt, suffering by a psychiatric illness because the attendants of the patient could not give such a history except that she occasionally conversed with ‘MATA’. On MATA’s

directive she used to undertake abnormal risky behavior, such as attempting to lift a cycle by finger.

Such patients are risky because they can expose to harm themselves as well as others by such acts. She was fortunate enough to have been rescued at the right time.

Funding: No funding sources

Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: Not required

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DOI: 10.5455/2320-6012.ijrms20150443

Cite this article as: Haque MA, Hussain M, Usmani JA. A bizarre case report of self-harm by ingested lock trapped in oropharynx. *Int J Res Med Sci* 2015;3:1015-7.