BACKGROUND: Intravenous injection of elemental mercury (Hg) is rare and considered relatively harmless. Treatment recommendations vary and the effectiveness of chelation therapy is controversial. CASE REPORT: A 27-year-old man intravenously injected 1.5 mL of elemental Hg. Within 12 hours he became febrile, tachycardic and dyspneic. Physical examination was unremarkable. X-rays showed scattered radiodense deposits in the lung, heart, intestinal wall, liver and kidney. The serum Hg level on admission was 172 microg/L and peaked on day 6 at 274 microg/L. Cumulative renal elimination during a five day oral treatment period with 2,3-dimercaptopropane-1-sulfonate (DMPS) and meso-2,3-dimercaptosuccinic acid (DMSA) was 8 mg and 3 mg, respectively. CONCLUSION: Although urinary excretion could be enhanced during chelation therapy, Hg deposits in organs resulted in negligible elimination of mercury compared to the exposed dose.
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