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Dear Keir

Re: Paraquat - emetic formulation

Like you, I do not believe that we can make any statement in respect of the effect of the emetic formulation on mortality based on the data from Samoa. However, I do not believe that a diagnosis of the involvement of emetic can be made purely on the presence of vomiting in a particular case of poisoning.

Recently, a case came to my attention at the Manchester Royal Infirmary in which three mouthfuls of Gramoxone were said to be involved. Vomiting occurred very early and the plasma levels were much lower than expected. At an early stage we thought we might be dealing with a case involving the emetic formulation but when I was able to obtain the container from which the material was ingested, we learned that it was stenchd and not emeticised. Experiments using the stenchd formulation in species that vomit (dogs and monkeys) have indicated that this material is so unpalatable that it induces vomiting in its own right. Therefore, I think we should be extremely cautious in making judgements about the emetic formulation and should await the definitive evidence of urinalysis.

Michael S Rose (Dr)