Case series

Between October 1994 and October 2015, a total of 210 exposures to colchicine were reported; hereof 139 cases of exposure to Colchicum autumnale (in 55 cases uncertain) and 71 cases of (certain) exposure to various colchicine containing drugs.

Of all 155 certain exposures, 31 cases (20 %) were suicide attempts, 80 cases (51.6 %) were accidental ingestions – about two-thirds of those by children (51 cases); both of the drug (9 cases) and of the leaves of Colchicum autumnale (42 cases) due to confusion with Allium ursinum (wild garlic). In 5 cases (3.2 %) adverse events at therapeutic doses had occurred. Medication errors were observed in 38 cases (24.5 %), in which prolonged application of a therapeutic dose often resulted in at least gastrointestinal symptoms, but no fatality.

Case report

A 71 year-old female with Parkinson's disease developed prolonged gastrointestinal symptoms (vomiting, diarrhoea) as well as mildly elevated liver enzymes after the ingestion of three “leaf tips” of Colchicum autumnale in a suicide attempt. She reported to hospital the next day (approx. 24 hours after ingestion) and gastrointestinal decontamination was not recommended. The patient was in intensive care for 4 days receiving IV fluids and PPI, and could subsequently be transferred to a psychiatric ward.

Case report

A 58 year-old male ingested 3 mg of colchicine per day over a period of 3 weeks and then reported to hospital with abdominal pain, diarrhoea, mild thrombocytopenia and elevated liver enzymes. Observation in hospital was recommended, however the further course is unknown.

Case report

An 89 year-old male with chronic pain syndrome and depression due to rheumatoid arthritis developed severe symptoms (gastrointestinal bleeding, dyspnoea, hypertension, first-degree atrioventricular block, lactic acidosis) resulting in multiple organ failure and death within 24 hours following the ingestion of ca. 100 ml Colchysat® (= 50 mg colchicine) in a suicide attempt. He was admitted to the hospital not before 12 hours after ingestion. Treatment was merely supportive, ECMO was not attempted.