

Case Report: Hunting Meth Mites by a Cigarette Fire: A Case Study



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Citation: Moshiri M, Rahimi P, Etemad L. Hunting Meth Mites by a Cigarette Fire: A Case Study. International Journal of Medical Toxicology and Forensic Medicine. 2020; 10(1):25478. <https://doi.org/10.32598/ijmtfm.v10i1.25478>

doi <https://doi.org/10.32598/ijmtfm.v10i1.25478>



Article info:

Received: 13 May 2019

First Revision: 17 May 2019

Accepted: 27 May 2019

Published: 03 Apr 2020

Keywords:

Methamphetamine;
Obsessive Behavior; Tactile
Hallucination; Self-harm

ABSTRACT

Background: Meth mites is a false sense annoys methamphetamine abusers forces them to self-harm by picking the skin, scratching it.

Case Presentation: We reported the photos showed a regular small round skin injuries on the forearms of a middle-age multi-drug abuser man. He explained about his injuries: "I was hunting annoying ants by cigarette fire, however they were fire-resistant and skipped". He had isolated tactile hallucination without visual part. He explained that every time he abuses methamphetamine (Shisheh in Iran) the ants attack him and bite him.

Conclusion: Drug induced formication could be a very dangerous hallucination that forces the patient to self-harm to get rid of it, especially in multidrug abusers.

1. Introduction

Drug abuse induces a sensory hallucination of bugs crawling on or within the skin, especially in the heavy daily users of methamphetamine [1]. Such a condition is called "coke bugs", "meth mites", and "amphetamites". The false sense annoys patients and forces them to self-harm by repetitively picking the skin, scratching it, and so on. The lesions appear in various shapes on different body areas; however, they are more common in easy-to-reach areas and on the opposite side of the patient's dominant hand.

2. Case Presentation

The photos (Figure 1) were taken from a middle-aged multidrug abuser male who was admitted to the poisoning ward because of consciousness loss secondary to a drug overdose. On the next morning of admission, he became alert and explained about his forearm's injuries. "I was hunting annoying ants by a cigarette fire; however, they were fire-resistant and skipped". He had isolated tactile hallucination without visual part. He explained that every time he abuses methamphetamine (Shisheh in Persian), the ants attack him and bite him. The studied patient was a multidrug abuser with a positive urine screen

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both hands



The healed scars of burnt are noticeable.

International Journal of
Medical Toxicology & Forensic Medicine

Figure 1. Burnt hands by cigarette fire in multi-drug abuser man secondary to drug induced formication.

Left: both hands; Right: left hand; note the healed scars of burnt

test of drug abuse for methamphetamine, amphetamine, morphine, and methadone. He was referred to psychiatric and dermatology departments. Unfortunately, he was discharged with personal consent; therefore, we were not able to proceed further with his case.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a prevalent condition in methamphetamine abusers [2]. They become obsessive and attempt to perform compulsive rituals, such as burning imaginary ants by a cigarette lighter. Our studied patient obsessively thought that he should hunt the ant only by a cigarette lighter despite the pain of burnt. The healed scars of burnt on the opposite dominant hand (left hand) demonstrated that the compulsive rituals were repetitive. The studied patient was a multidrug abuser with a positive urine screen test of drug abuse for methamphetamine, amphetamine, morphine, and methadone. We assumed that the mixed-use of methamphetamine and opiate-induced sufficient analgesia, leading him to self-burn [3].

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, drug-induced formication could be a highly dangerous hallucination; consequently, it forces the patient to self-harm to stop it, especially in multidrug abusers.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

The patient let us to publish his forearms photos by signing the informed consent form.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Author's contributions

Visiting the patient, taking photos, writing the first draft: Mohammad Moshiri; Translating and editing the manuscript: Parastoo Rahimi; Corresponding and approving the final draft: Leila Etemad.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the staff of poisoning ward of Imam Reza Hospital for their kind cooperation.

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