

Alert on misuse of Chinese medicine

The Department of Health (DH) has recently received notification of a case of Chinese medicine misuse from the Hospital Authority (HA). Without consulting a Chinese medicine practitioner (CMP), the affected male patient purchased the Chinese herbal medicine (Chm) unprocessed Radix Aconiti Kusnezoffii from the Mainland for consumption. He was admitted to a public hospital for treatment. Laboratory results from HA showed aconitum alkaloids in his urine. The suspected contributing factor for this event of misuse was consumption of Chinese medicines without instruction from CMP.

Unprocessed Radix Aconiti Kusnezoffii is listed in Schedule 1 of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 549). It contains toxic alkaloids like aconitine and beiwutine etc. It is commonly used externally but should not be ingested. Improper use could lead to numbness over the mouth, tongue, limbs and trunk, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, difficulty in breathing, arrhythmia and even death.

DH reminds members of the public to consult a CMP before taking Chinese medicines, and to follow their instructions on decoction and consumption regime. The public should not self-prescribe Chinese medicines, nor be credulous about formulae told by others. Chinese medicines should be purchased from licensed Chinese herbal medicine retailers to minimise the risk of acquiring herbal medicines that are improperly processed. Medical advice should be sought if there is any discomfort after consumption.

Members of the public may visit the website of Chinese Medicine Regulatory Office of DH (https://www.cmro.gov.hk/html/eng/useful_information/public_health/index.html) for information about safe use of Chinese medicines.

Chinese Medicine Regulatory Office
Department of Health
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