

Drug's Intoxication Homicide – A Case Study

¹D.K. Sharma, ²Dr. Sharma Mitakshara and ³Dr. Asha verma,

¹S.S.O. & A.C.E. To Govt. of M.P. District Scene of Crime Unit Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India

²Senior Resident, Department of pathology, UCMS & GTB hospital, New Delhi, India

³Professor, Department of chemistry, Govt. Science and Commerce College, Benazeer Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India

Abstract: Drugs (Drug-French: Drogue-a dry herb) are frequently involved in homicidal, accidental or suicidal deaths. The ever-increasing number of synthetic drugs, which are used as poisons, is adding to the complications. Some drugs are very close to one another in their chemical and physiological behaviour. The increasing use of drugs along with liquor is becoming a common trend in homicide. The use of drugs causes increased level of intoxication, which results in the victim's inability to judge the gravity of the situation and hence very often falls on easy prey to the murderer's whims. Since the deceased is generally heavily drunk the investigating agencies tend to divert from a homicidal murder to often an accidental one e.g. Benzodiazepanes (BZDs) produce centrally mediated skeletal muscle relaxation without impairing voluntary activity. BZDs synergise with alcohol and other CNS depressants leading to excessive impairment.

Key Words: Homicidal, Accidental, Alcohol, Oxazepam, Narcotic, Hepatic, Bzds.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to WHO (1966) "Drug is any substance or product that is used or is intended to be used to modify or explore physiological systems or pathological states for the benefit of the recipient". The term 'drugs' is being also used to mean addictive/abused substances. However, this restricted and derogatory sense usage is unfortunate degradation of a time-honoured term.

The society is undergoing drastic *social changes* at a very rapid pace. These changes have made the old techniques of criminal investigation obsolete. The field of activities of the criminal is widening at a terrific rate. The analysis can be no better than *sample analyses*. The clue material has to be identified positively; otherwise the evidentiary value of the clue is limited. In a poisoning case it is not sufficient to identify the killer drug as a sedative but it is necessary to find out which one it is, so that its source could be traced and linked to the criminals.

Most of the poisons is to prevent the supply of oxygen to body tissues. Alcohol paralyse the respiratory centers, stopping the breathing.¹ Addiction of liquor is a common phenomenon. The addicts are unaffected by the normal fatal doses of the materials, but if the motive/object is to kill some one, addiction of a hypnotic drug causes increased effects of intoxication.

The basic greed in humans has been the cause of wars and deaths. If it is not in a war human being kill fellow human just for this instinct greed and once the crime has been committed the urgent need to save one self becomes so strong that a murderer often tries to hide and show it as an accidental death. Now it is the role of the investigation agencies, the doctors and forensic scientist to work together join the pieces of a jig-jaw puzzle so that truth comes in the forefront.

II. CASE STUDY

When a crime has been committed with a vehicle, the investigator has to find out clues to establish that a crime has actually been committed or not by the vehicle and that the clues link the culprit and the victim with the vehicle.

A case was reported from the Kotwar of village Dogarpur of P.S. Belgarah, Distt: Gwalior (M.P.) that the finding of a dead body on the side of road going towards Village Bazana. On the scene the deceased was found on side of the road. There were injuries on mouth and both jaws (upper and lower). There was profuse bleeding from the face, lips, nose, mouth and ears. Some notes, papers and a diary were found from deceased's pocket. As per this information a Marg case was registered and investigation started. On the basis of identity card it was found that the deceased was Jahar singh S/o Siyaram Jatav aged 35 years. The case looked like a hit and run accidental case but scene of crime suggested that this could be homicidal.

At scene there were no fragments of paint or glass in the hair or clothing, of the victim; paint, glass or broken-off parts of the vehicle at the scene; oil or grease on the body or clothing of victim; tyre marks at the scene, tyre-tread impressions on the body or clothing of the victim.² In the investigation of crimes involving vehicles physical clues play a very important part. Locard's principle, 'contact leaves traces' is very well.³ On the basis of above principle the case was investigated as homicidal and not an accidental. During investigation main accused in this case and his accomplice finally accepted the fact that due to long standing enmity they had enticed the deceased to accompany them to the spot on the false pretext that they will take them to a sadhu baba who will give the deceased the number to play in satta. The deceased was given a heavy dose of liquor with oxazepam so that on drinking liquor with drug the deceased got dizzy and it was than that the accused and his accomplice killed him by hitting his head with a heavy stone and put the body near the road to show it as a hit and run accidental case.

In the postmortem report of the deceased the doctor reported the cause of death was head injuries and mode of death was coma. The viscera of the deceased were sent to the Regional Forensic Science Laboratory (R.F.S.L.) Gwalior (M.P.) for the detection of the drug or its traces and identify it. The viscera report of deceased from R.F.S.L. Gwalior (M.P.) revealed the presence of oxazepam, which is a main component of ceripex and ethyl alcohol. The quantity of ethyl alcohol in viscera was found to be 184 mg. per 100 grams of viscera.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Toxic effects are the result of excessive pharmacological action of the drug to over-dosage (fig-1). Over-dosage may be absolute (accidental, homicidal or suicidal).

When an alcoholic drink is taken, it immediately starts getting absorbed in the body through the stomach membrane and small intestine. Alcohol affects the central

nervous system in all amounts and the whole body, vision, hearing and speech are all affected. Alcohol is a narcotic. That is, it has a depressant effect on the system⁵.

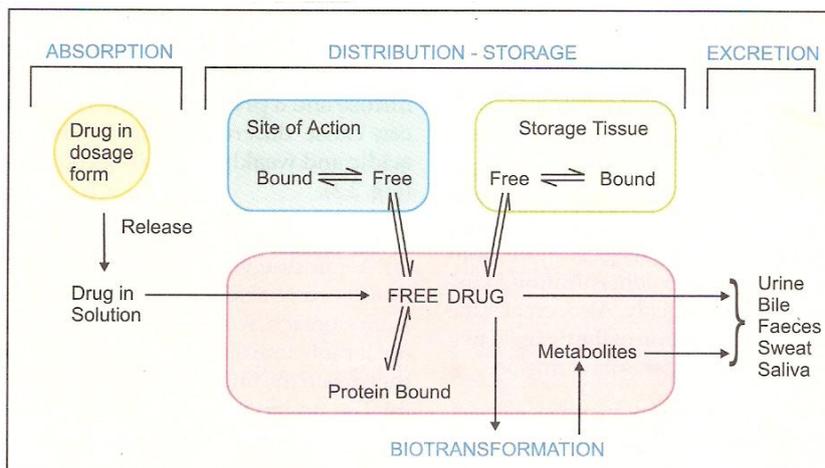


Figure 1: Schematic depiction of pharmacokinetic processes⁴

Approximately 90 percent of absorbed alcohol is oxidised in the liver, the remaining 10 percent being excreted mainly by the kidneys and lungs.⁶

The danger of taking alcohol and a drug together is (or should be) well known. In many fatal cases, less than individually lethal amounts of either are found, and they may even potentiate each other's action⁷.

Oxazepam (Ceripex) is a drug of benzodiazepines (BZDs) derivative. The formula of Oxazepam is $C_{15}H_{11}ClN_2O_2$. The systematic (IUPAC) name of oxazepam is 9-chloro-4-hydroxy-6-phenyl-2, 5-diazabicyclo[5.4.0] undeca - 5, 8, 10, 12 - tetraen-3-one.⁸

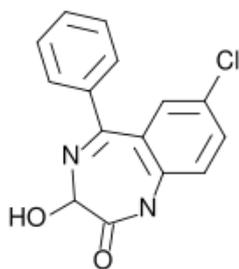


Figure 2: Oxazepam

Oxazepam possesses anxiolytic, anticonvulsant, sedative and skeletal muscle relaxant properties. Oxazepam may be safer than many other benzodiazepines in patients with impaired liver function because it does not require hepatic oxidation, but rather it is simply metabolized via glucuronidation. This means that oxazepam is less likely to accumulate and cause adverse reactions in the elderly or people with liver disease.

Oxazepam has been reported to intensify the feeling of planned intoxication and leads to enhanced stupor and anxiety associated with depressions. The Sedative action of the drug along with reported heavy dose of ethyl alcohol in the viscera could have caused the drowsiness in the deceased of which the accused took advantage and killed him.

CONCLUSION

A road accident in India is a common occurrence. In road accident cases it is necessary to ascertain the onus for accident. It is a bizarre case of cold blooded calculated murder. The accused have been said to have lured the deceased to the

scene of crime took heavy dose of alcoholic drinks and mixed some sedative drug with the liquor. The deceased was heavily intoxicated and it was then he was brutally murdered and thrown on roadside to look like an accidental hit and run case due to heavy ethyl alcohol drinking. The minute observation at the scene of crime, the P.M. report and report of the viscera examination told the truth of the whole case. The accused have confessed about giving the said drug to the deceased along with heavy dose of alcoholic drink.

Hence scientific approach to the investigation has helped turn a apparently hit and run accidental case in to on of calculated cold blooded murder where physical evidences at the scene of crime were almost non-existent.

References

- [1] Modi's Medical Jurisprudence and Toxicology. 22nd Edition.
- [2] Forensic Science, An Introduction to Scientific Crime Detection. H.J. Walls. 2nd Edition.
- [3] Edition.
- [4] Homicide. S.K. Ghosh. 2nd Edition.
- [5] Essential's of medical Pharmacology. K.D. Tripathi 5th Edition.
- [6] Forensic Science in Criminal Investigation and Trials. B.R. Sharma. 4th Edition.
- [7] Parikh's Text book of Medical Jurisprudence, Forensic Medicine and Toxicology.
- [8] The Essentials of Forensic Medicine and toxicology. K.S. Narayan Reddy 26th Edition
- [9] 2007.
- [10] The Merck's Index 13th Edition. An Encyclopedia of Chemicals, Drugs and Biological.