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SUSPECTED SNAKE BITE

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INTRODUCTION

Snake bites are a common problem in Sri Lanka among people living in rural and agricultural areas. At the site of the bite, the local signs are predominant in cobra and viper. The cobra bites show neurological manifestations while viper bites show haemorrhagic manifestations. The following case highlights the importance of meticulous autopsy in dead bodies found in estates with early putrefaction.

CASE REPORT

A 52 year old dead body was found in an estate with early putrefaction. The body was in his usual route to the illicit alcohol dealer. He was last seen alive in the morning the day before the recovery. He has no conflicts with others in the village.

At autopsy, his left foot and leg were swollen comparatively. A fang mark was noted in the anterior aspect of the left leg in lower one third with underlying subcutaneous and muscle haematoma. The rest of the post mortem examination was unremarkable except for a haemorrhagic left kidney on cut section. There was no evidence of ante mortem violence.

Kidneys showed features of acute tubular necrosis with hyaline casts within tubules, diffuse interstitial haemorrhages and focal necrosis of glomeruli. Lungs showed interstitial and alveolar haemorrhages. The bite site tissue showed disrupted red blood cells with abundant red cell clumps. Blood alcohol level was 356 mg/100ml.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering the history, the place the body was lying, and autopsy findings, the cause of death was given as envenomation due to viper bite.