



## ANTICHOLINERGIC TOXIN INDUCED DELIRIUM AND RARE CLINICAL SIGN OF CARPHOLOGIA, OBSERVED IN CRITICAL CARE

### Neurology

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### ABSTRACT

Delirium is a common presentation in Intensive care units treating neurological emergencies. Anticholinergic toxicity [ anti -Ach] is one of the causes of Delirium. Atropine, Hyoscine, scopolamine, belladonna, Deadly night shade [ Mandrake], [Stinking Night Shade] Hyocimus Niger and Jimson weed or Datura seeds are anticholinergic toxins. Acute onset Delirium without any prior history of psychiatric illness, is the most common symptom of anticholinergic toxin ingestion or exposure.<sup>1</sup> Accidental consumption via traditional medical practitioners or quacks often use crude extracts of anticholinergic drugs that lead to delirium, hallucinations, stupor, irrelevant talk and raised body temperature. Atropine, an anticholinergic drug, is also given as an antidote to Organophosphate toxicity in humans. Delirium is also seen in Atropinized patients. Central Anticholinergic syndrome CAS, has been described in Anaesthesia.<sup>19</sup> Carphologia means "to behave as though one were collecting straw" First mentioned in the writings of Aristaeus. Carphologia, Crocydismus or Floccillation is described as "picking at clothes or bed linen". It is an important clinical sign seen in agitated Delirium due to anticholinergic poisoning. In this retrospective cohort study of various forms of delirium cases, the Authors studied only anticholinergic toxicity related Delirium in 21 patients. Pre-and post-treatment recovery scores of organic deliriums were compared using DSR-98-16 item scale as a tool at onset and recovery. All patients showed dramatic complete recovery within 24 hrs of withdrawal of the drug. The study was conducted in patients to observe features of Delirium in Anticholinergic toxicity, the differences between delirium seen in Synthetic Vs natural anticholinergic extracts and to Calculate the optimum dose of Anticholinergic atropine as therapeutic agent as per bodyweight for minimising delirium & toxicity in OPC patients under critical care.

### KEYWORDS

Delirium, Carphologia, Atropine, OPC poisoning, Organic brain syndromes, Neuro-Critical care

### INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Acute confusional state or Delirium is the presenting symptom of Toxicity due to anticholinergic drugs like Atropine, Scopolamine, Diphenhydramine, Chlorpheniramine. Toxic Plants like Deadly Nightshade: Mandragora officinarum[laxmana], Atropa Belladonna [luckmanee], Datura Stramonium [ Dhotara, Dhatura], Brugmansia and Hyocimus Niger [ Khursani Ajwain] used in traditional medicine, can result in toxicity if not consumed under proper guidance. A common mnemonic used to describe the physiologic manifestations of anticholinergic drug overdose is: "hot as a hare, blind as a bat, dry as a bone, red as a beet, and mad as a hatter".<sup>4</sup> Other symptoms include warm, dry skin from decreased sweating, blurry vision, decreased

sweating/lacrimation, vasodilation, and central nervous system effects on muscarinic receptors, type  $M_1$  and  $M_3$ . These symptoms are exclusive to anticholinergic drug use or abuse and differ from other causes of Delirium. Delirium seen in psychiatric practice or in ICU settings, Delirium and acute mania may include perplexed, fearful and labile emotions, distractible attention, jumbled speech, disinhibited behaviour, and hallucinations and delusions.<sup>6</sup> Presence of the sign or Carphologia, is almost exclusive to organic brain condition caused due to anticholinergic oral ingestion. Oral consumption of anticholinergic drugs leads to a set of symptoms are known as anticholinergic toxidrome.<sup>18</sup> Table no 2 enlists the causes of acute confusional states. Before considering the diagnosis of Toxins, usual common causes should be investigated first.

**Table 1 DSM classification of delirium.5 Diagnosis of Delirium.**

DSM-5
A. Disturbance in attention (i.e., reduced ability to direct, focus, sustain, and shift attention) and awareness (reduced orientation to the environment).
B. The disturbance develops over a short period of time (usually hours to a few days), represents an acute change from baseline attention and awareness, and tends to fluctuate in severity during the course of a day.
C. An additional disturbance in cognition (e.g. memory deficit, disorientation, language, visuospatial ability, or perception).
D. The disturbances in Criteria A and C are not better explained by a pre-existing, established or evolving neurocognitive disorder and do not occur in the context of a severely reduced level of arousal such as coma.
E. There is evidence from the history, physical examination or laboratory findings that the disturbance is a direct physiological consequence of another medical condition, substance intoxication or withdrawal (i.e. due to a drug of abuse or to a medication), or exposure to a toxin, or is due to multiple aetiologies'.

;DSM-5, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition.

**Physiological mechanism of Delirium in anticholinergic overdose.**<sup>14</sup> Acetylcholine plays an important role in consciousness, perhaps by modulating the signal-noise ratio of sensory and cognitive input and focusing awareness by activating the reticular activating system. The major pathogenic mechanism in delirium is thus often presumed to be central cholinergic deficiency. Anticholinergic drugs act as antagonists at the receptor levels. The increase in anti-acetylcholine activity is also responsible to override the normal cholinergic inhibition in areas

where Ach acts as inhibitory neurotransmitter.-.<sup>18</sup> Some evidence suggests that endogenous anticholinergic substances may exist and be of clinical importance. Action of acetylcholine is mainly on 2 types of receptors, Muscarinic & Nicotinic. The muscarinic receptors are of 5 kinds  $M_1$ ,  $M_2$ ,  $M_3$ ,  $M_4$ ,  $M_5$ . The Homunculus of the cerebral cortex representing the locomotors area has mostly  $M_5$  type receptors, Reticular activating system has  $M_3$  receptors. Anticholinergics like atropine, scopolamine, Hyocimus, act as antagonists at these receptor

levels. The increased locomotor activity, loss of orientation, Motor agitation and increased muscle activity seen in delirium due to Anticholinergic overdose in our study, could be correlated with areas of the brain having the Muscarinic receptors namely hippocampus,

Reticular activating system and Frontal lobe. Anti Ach drugs like atropine or substances may have a major role in impairment of recall and short-term memory.<sup>22</sup>

**Neurological & non-neurological Causes of Delirium: table no 2**

Neurological causes	Non-Neurological causes	Others Mimicking Delirious states.
Cerebrovascular Strokes, Infarction, Haemorrhage, transient ischemic attack, Subarachnoid haemorrhage	Endocrine diseases: Cushing's disease, Hyperthyroidism.	Drug/ toxins- Anticholinergics/antiemetic's, antihistamine /antihypertensive, antimicrobial/ antipsychotics, antispasmodics/benzodiazepines
Infection/inflammation: Meningitis, Encephalitis Demyelinating Encephalopathy, sepsis, Tumour-Carcinomatous, Metastasis, Trauma-Sub Dural hematoma, Epilepsy postictal Temporal lobe,	Hypoxia, Hypoglycaemia, Hypo/ hypernatremia Hyperthermia, Uremia, Post-traumatic stress disorder	Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, Psychoses, Mania, Dementia, Schizophrenia,

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:**

An observational Longitudinal cohort study of 54 patients with acute onset delirium, admitted in an ICU of a public hospital was conducted over a period of 2 years. Records were analysed retrospectively in 2 ways **Part 1:** was diagnosis of Medical causes of delirium and application of Validated 16 item DSR-98 scale to evaluate difference between psychiatric causes and medical causes of delirium. **Part 2:** The data was then divided into 2 groups. Group 1 who were diagnosed to have anticholinergic toxicity due to non-therapeutic oral drug ingestion Vs group 2, Delirium cases who were given therapeutic antidote of intravenous anticholinergic Atropine for OPC poisoning.

**The objective** was to 1] study different kinds of features seen in Delirium of organic origin among ICU patients. 2] to observe differences between delirium seen in Synthetic Vs natural anticholinergic extracts. 3] Calculate the optimum dose of Anticholinergic atropine as therapeutic agent as per bodyweight for minimising delirium & toxicity in OPC patients under critical care.

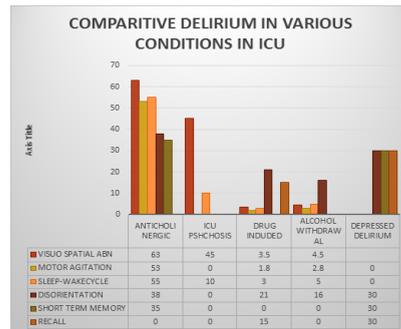
**Inclusion criteria** were select cases of anti-cholinergic drug ingestion presenting with delirium and cases of Organophosphorus poisonings in whom atropine drug induced Delirium was diagnosed. The diagnosis of Delirium in drug consumption was done by history, neurological examination and cognitive scale of DRs R 98-16 item Validated scale as per ICU protocol. The diagnosis of delirium in ICU patients who were given atropine for Organophosphorus poisonings and went into acute delirium, was done by same scale. The protocol involved analysis of the Demographic information, History, clinical presentations of symptoms and signs, Serum cholinesterase levels to confirm anticholinesterase activity. Scores were compared for severity of delirium on day 1 & day 3. Tools used were DRS R98 16 item scale including 13 severity items & 3 diagnostic criteria. Scores were given from 0-45, higher scores indicating delirium > 15.<sup>8</sup> as per Trzepacz et al. (2001). Albert et al.1992. Video recording of interviews were done with consent, pre-and post-therapy. Recovery from delirium was recorded by Comparison of test scores of Drs R98 16 items scale, pre-and post-therapy or withdrawal of drug. The dose range for atropine was tabulated by adding the total doses given for successfully treating carbamate poisoning cases per/kg body weight, on discharge. Any other Drug treatment given for controlling delirium was noted. Other investigations to rule out organic brain syndromes were done with standard laboratory tests and methods namely: Blood investigations of CBC, Blood sugar, Serum creatinine, Electrolytes, Serum ammonia, RI brain and EEG. The history and Low serum pseudo-cholinesterase activity measured by standard tests confirmed diagnosis of organophosphate toxicity in whom Atropine was given as antidote.

**Exclusion criteria:** Children, pregnant women, Comatose patients, patients having psychiatric diseases or psychosis, patients with established neurological diseases, Comatose patients, patients who left against medical advice, ICU psychosis, other systemic diseases or metabolic brain disorders leading to delirium, Blind patients or with physical disabilities, were excluded. Adequate sample size was taken into consideration by applying 95% confidence interval.

**RESULTS AND OUTCOMES.**

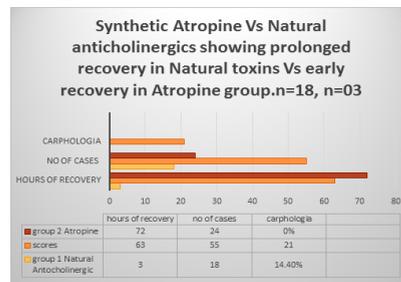
**Primary observations** were, Delirium due to anticholinergic toxicity has definitive distinct symptoms than due to delirium due to other organic brain syndromes. The prominent features are 1] Extreme motor aggression requiring restraint 2] Hallucinations of paranoia 3] Difficult recall and memory impairment after withdrawal of drug 4] Rage phenomena and abusive language. Carphologia observed 3 in patients helped to diagnose cause of acute delirium. Graph 1 shows

comparative features of different types of Delirium. 95.23% Patients were males. [ n=21, M=18/F=3]. Highest scores allotted was 63 for each question and lowest was 0. Highest scores were obtained for affection of Sleep-wake cycle in 95.23% patients, followed by loss of orientation in time, place and person, short term memory loss 90.22%. Loss of Visual-spatial ability, Motor retardation gained lowest 0. Sleep wake cycle affected severely total score of 63. The pre-and post-scores are indicated in columns no E & F of Table no 1. 47% patients had shown symptoms of hallucination due to anticholinergic drugs. Hallucinations decreased after treatment or withdrawal of Atropine. All patients with ingestion of natural anticholinergic showed hallucinations. Attention was severely affected in all cases. Delusions were absent in both groups. Language was undistorted in both groups but due to extreme dryness of mouth, slowing and slurring of speech, was seen. Motor agitation was observed in both groups equally and restraint was necessary. Carphologia was observed in 14% patients of Delirium. Patients of Natural toxin exposures with delirium showed reversal and recovery from agitated Delirium after treatment with average 3 doses of Iv physostigmine/Neostigmine 0.5mg/dose not more than 0.02mg/kg. Females had delayed onset of drug induced delirium as compared to males. [ N=3/post 24 hrs]



**Chart 1** above showing comparative scores of different kinds of Delirium with same scale DRS R98-16point scale.

**Secondary observations** were, the dose range of IV Atropine required for the patient to develop psychosis in Organophosphate toxicity was as low as mg 7.2mg found in a 16year old female. Delirium in Patients administered atropine, resolved without treatment after drug was withdrawn. Mean duration of Delirium was 22.86 hrs. No residual effects recorded before discharge. Mean indoor stay till complete recovery was 9.14 days. EEG recordings were normal. Anticholinergic required in high doses coincided with low serum cholinesterase activity. Agitated Delirium was seen earlier in patients with normal cholinesterase activity. **chart 2** below shows recovery time after treatment or withdrawal of anticholinergic drugs and Carphologia seen only among patients who had delirium due to Natural anticholinergic extracts.





Organophosphorus poisonings did not show Carphologia as a sign during the period of delirium. [n= 18] The delirium seen in both groups was of extreme 'agitated type'. Therapies for delirium include treatment of underlying cause. Cochrane reviews 2005-2009 state the standard drugs like Haloperidol, Risperidone, Quetiapine, Midazolam or lorazepam don't work in some cases.<sup>7</sup> Benzodiazepines, anticonvulsants have been tried in controlling agitation due to alcohol withdrawal, as per evidence in the 3 cases, uncontrolled agitation in delirium responds to therapy of Intravenous neostigmine repeated after 20 minutes and 1 hour, to control agitation requiring restraint. The treatments essentially need cardiac monitoring, restraint and an intensive care setting and should be done under expert guidance and monitoring of vital parameters. In induced delirium due to therapeutic administration of Atropine sulphate, the reduction of dose was effective in controlling delirium and no specific therapy was required to revert delirium, indicating a cumulative effect of atropine sulphate resulting in toxicity. Carphologia is a significant clue to suspect anticholinergic substance or drugs overdose when patients come with acute confusion. This sign is not seen in synthetic analogues of drugs like Atropine sulphate, commonly used as antidotes for OPC poisonings.

The study emphasizes Key learning points as 1] Delirium in ICU needs a disciplined approach, different criteria to differentiate from delirium due to other causes. 2] Over the counter sale of traditional forms of medications should be discouraged and medications should be taken under guidance of registered practitioner of traditional medicines. 4] Therapeutic trial of physostigmine/neostigmine can be given to control agitation in delirium suspected to be due to natural anticholinergic toxicity. Especially when Routine drugs like haloperidol, Lorazepam, Benzodiazepines or anticonvulsants, fail to control agitation. Strictly with cardiac and respiratory monitoring.

**Scope & Limitations:** The study helped to classify features of various types of delirium seen in ICU settings. It provides insight for correlating dose of atropine in organophosphorus poisonings, with various co factors like bodyweight, frequency of administration, Mode of administration. Carphologia, an important rare seen clinical sign, is also highlighted in this study. This sample size was not so significant but provides evidence for quantitative research. It was Time consuming and required high end audio video equipment handy when such cases are treated. Doctors need to be technologically trained to use recording equipment effectively without affecting bias or breaching confidentiality.

**No conflicts of Interest or financial interest to be declared.** The Authors wish to thank the Dean of the institute for the study of cases. Informed Consent of patients as well as first relatives was taken for recording and of videos and use for academic purpose. No Ethical issues or financial interests to be declared. The Authors permit use of print Resource and article for academic purpose.

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