

BCM J

BC Medical Journal

We welcome original letters of less than 300 words; they may be edited for clarity and length. Letters may be emailed to journal@doctorsofbc.ca, submitted online at bcmj.org/submit-letter, or sent through the post and must include your mailing address, telephone number, and email address. All letter writers will be required to disclose any competing interests.

Re: Toxic lead exposure via an unusual source

In the Jan/Feb BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) article [*BCM J* 2019;61:41], authors refer to an ayurvedic herbal remedy as an unusual source of toxic lead exposure. In fact, ayurvedic herbal medicine has been well documented to contain toxic lead levels.^{1,2} The BCCDC article serves as a reminder of the importance of inquiring into a patient's use of complementary and alternative medicine as an integral part of history taking. The use of ayurvedic medicine and potential lead poisoning can be readily identified, and that identification may have saved many emergency room visits, medical visits, and extensive investigations in this patient's case.

Ayurvedic herbal medicine from India and Chinese herbal medicine are the two most common complementary and alternative medicines that may contain lead and other heavy metals. In addition, some children's costume jewelry has been reported as an unusual source of toxic lead exposure.³

—H.C. George Wong, MD, FRCPC
Vancouver

References

1. Gair R. Heavy metal poisoning from ayurvedic medicines. *BCM J* 2008;50:105.
2. Gunturu KS, Nagarajan P, McPhedran P, et al. Ayurvedic herbal medicine and lead poisoning. *J Hematol Oncol* 2011;4:51.
3. Wong HCG. Trouble in toyland: Potential source of lead. *BCM J* 2010;52:10.

Re: Cannabis use by adolescents

I thank Dr Ocana for his insightful article, "Cannabis use by adolescents: Practical implications for clinicians" [*BCM J* 2018;61:14-19]. I would, however, question his conclusion that "there are more accidental overdoses and deaths. . ." attributed to the legalization of cannabis. His reference for this statement¹ mentions a single death due to myocarditis in an 11-month-old who tested positive for THC. In a *Washington Post* article² about that case, the child was said to be in an "unstable motel-living situation" with parents who admitted to multiple drug possessions, including marijuana. No causal relationship was suggested

in the case report³ described in that article, and the death was attributed to myocarditis, not marijuana exposure.² In fact, authors of the case report noted, "As of this writing, this is the first reported pediatric death associated with cannabis exposure."² Also in the article, "Nappe emphasized that the word 'associated' should not be interpreted as indicating a cause and effect."² I would also question the conclusion that cannabis legalization has led to more overdoses. Certainly legalization has been associated with more reported overdoses, but this could reflect willingness of parents to report accidental exposure because of decriminalization.

—Mike Figurski, MD,
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References

1. Wang GS, Le Lait MC, Deakynne SJ, et al. Unintentional pediatric exposures to marijuana in Colorado, 2009-2015. *JAMA Pediatr* 2016;170:e160971.
2. Silverman E. *Washington Post*. The truth behind the 'first marijuana overdose death' headlines. Accessed 2 April 2019. www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2017/11/17/the-truth-behind-the-first-marijuana-overdose-death/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.011195650cf0.
3. Nappe TM, Hoyte CO. Pediatric death due to myocarditis after exposure to cannabis. *Clin Pract Cases Emerg Med* 2017;1:166-170.

Doctors of BC AGM Vancouver, 31 May 2019

Doctors of BC members are invited to attend the 2019 AGM to be held at UBC's Robert H. Lee Alumni Centre, 6163 University Blvd. Registration starts at 3:15 p.m. and the AGM will begin at 4:30 p.m. in the Jack Poole Hall.

Awards ceremony is on Saturday, 1 June at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel. Reception at 5 p.m. will be followed by the awards ceremony at 6 p.m., installation of the officers of the Doctors of BC, and the president's dinner with remarks from the new president. Dr Kathleen Ross.

To register and for more information on all related events, visit www.doctorsofbc.ca/agm.