

The Importance of Correct Diagnosis

It is widely accepted that the first stage in the recovery process from any illness is to obtain a timely and accurate diagnosis of the condition. It is the essential first step to recovery but in many illnesses patients will feel lost, confused and failed by the medical profession if their conditions are not quickly diagnosed. There is also a very real danger, not only to the health of patients, but also in many cases to their survival if that essential diagnosis is delayed or misdiagnosed. A delayed diagnosis can result in a serious worsening of the condition. A wrong diagnosis can result in medical professionals treating the symptoms without realising that the treatments used may be contraindicated or even potentially fatal.

There may be much relief for patients with illnesses which are not easily diagnosed when they are finally given the correct diagnosis and can begin the essential treatment needed for their recovery but any delay may well have caused them to lose employment, families or even their homes.

The situation has been made much worse in the UK in recent years because of the well-reported difficulty in even obtaining appointments to see doctors in general practice and this has also put greater pressure on already over-worked hospitals. Further difficulties arise because patients have limited time with their doctors and the allotted ten minutes for appointments gives little time in complex cases for doctors to obtain detailed history or the thorough examinations needed for accurate diagnosis. For some unknown reason it has also been decreed that doctors should only refer to one symptom at any appointment, which cannot be sensible in complex cases where illnesses present with a multiplicity of important symptoms that must be considered as part of a correct diagnosis.

An illness may have cardiorespiratory, neurological, immune system and hormonal effects and considering them all and not each in isolation is much more likely to assist the doctor to come to an accurate diagnosis. Careful consideration of all aspects of an illness, including patient history, is therefore essential if the correct treatment is to be provided to enable full recovery. In fact a misdiagnosis and provision of the wrong treatment could well result in the patient being unable to fully recover, with all the social costs which that incurs.

A perfect example of the difficulties of forming a correct diagnosis is seen in organophosphate poisoning. Diagnosis of poisoning by these chemicals is notoriously difficult, which is why a presumption of cause was built into the Industrial Injury Legislation in the UK as long ago as 1958. Organophosphorus compounds are found in a vast range of products including pesticides, medicines, plastics, oils, paints and flame retardants. They are frequently used even in computers and electrical goods to prevent insect infestation and to reduce the risk from fire. They are also deliberately added to our food in order to prevent insect infestation in flour etc.

People who are exposed to these poisons may not even know that they have been exposed but repeated exposure is dangerous, probably more dangerous than is a single acute exposure which, though potentially fatal, often results in hospital admission and the correct antidotes being administered. Those experiencing repeated or chronic exposures may not even realise they have been exposed until the effects of the poisons accumulate and the symptoms become more acute. In these cases the often systemic chemicals will have entered various cells in the body causing vital functions to be disrupted. This will result in a myriad of symptoms, some of which doctors may at first glance assume are caused by another illness and treat accordingly. This can be extremely dangerous for the patient. Missing the correct diagnosis also means that the patient is deprived of the antidotes.

Symptoms of organophosphorus poisoning include cardiorespiratory failure, the most common cause of death; Neurological problems, including tremors, involuntary movements, balance difficulties, sensation loss, memory and cognitive problems, and unexplained severe pain in muscles and joints, which may collapse without warning; circulation problems such as cyanosis of the extremities; loss of temperature control, increased sweating, salivation and watering eyes; digestive problems such as acid reflux, anorexia, obesity, diarrhoea; immune system issues including allergic reactions, chemical sensitivity, skin infections and autoimmune diseases, cancers; confusion, taste and smell abnormalities; hearing problems such as tinnitus; vision problems such as focussing difficulties, double vision, colour and visual field distortion and increased sensitivity to light; hormone imbalances; diabetes; infertility; degeneration of bones and teeth; lack of energy and even blackouts. Every system in the body is adversely affected with the cells unable to properly utilise vital oxygen.

A patient reporting such a raft of symptoms without the doctor's knowledge of the exposure history could quickly be labelled as a hypochondriac, an asthmatic, even a malingerer or suffering from mental illness, imagining the symptoms, but the denial of the correct diagnosis would be extremely detrimental to the patients' health, life and mental state.

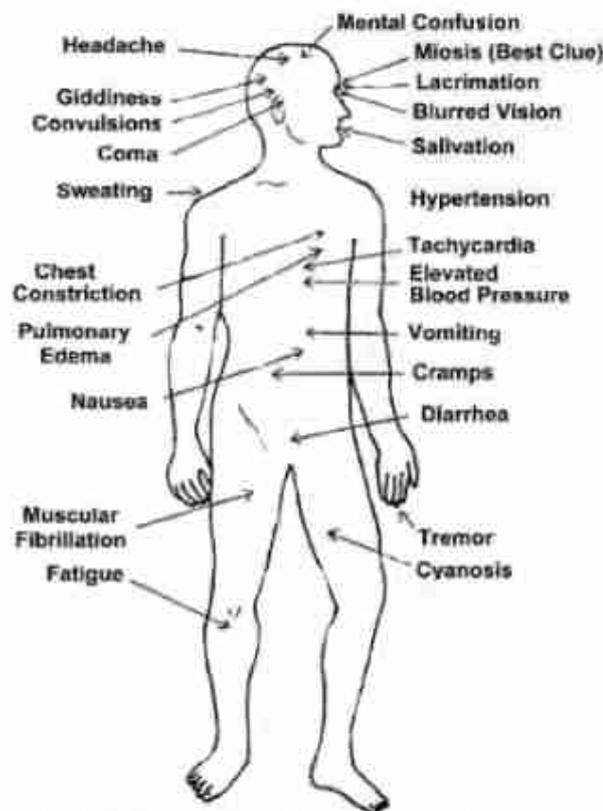
All too many people who were formerly strong and able farm workers or military personnel but were then exposed to these poisons without receiving the correct diagnosis have been so distressed that they have taken their own lives in tragic circumstances.

Others who have been exposed may go on to develop dementia, or multiple sclerosis (because some of these poisons trigger the demyelination of nerve fibres characteristic of the disease), Parkinsonism, heart failure, chronic airways diseases, allergies, or even diabetes and cancer with the true cause never having been identified and any treatments given causing more symptoms and worsening health. The risks posed by these chemicals are obvious and have been known for many years and yet despite hundreds of thousands of deaths resulting from exposures every year nothing is done to stop the carnage, with all efforts instead made to hide the terrible truth.

With diseases such as cancer, dementia, Multiple Sclerosis, Motor Neurone Disease, heart failure, chronic obstructive airways disease, autism, diabetes etc., officials of government never question the doctor's diagnosis but in cases of organophosphorus poisoning officials of government seem determined to ensure that no diagnosis of chronic poisoning by these chemicals is recognised, even with specialist confirmation of the diagnosis. In no other illness does this occur.

The importance of correct diagnosis and treatment in all patients cannot be overestimated.

MANIFESTATIONS OF ORGANOPHOSPHATE INSECTICIDE POISONING (CHOLINESTERASE INHIBITORS)



PESTICIDE POISONING MAY MIMIC:

- BRAIN HEMORRHAGE
- HEAT EXHAUSTION
- HYPOGLYCEMIA
- PNEUMONIA OR OTHER SEVERE RESPIRATORY INFECTION
- HEAT STROKE
- GASTROENTERITIS
- ASTHMA

