

Case Reports

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Open air carbon monoxide poisoning

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Abstract

An unusual manner of carbon monoxide poisoning claimed the lives of two adults in two separate incidents. In the first case, a young man was four wheeling in a swampy area when his jeep became stuck in the mud as he continued to floor the accelerator. Carbon monoxide fumes entered the vehicle through the rusted floorboards, killing the driver. In the second case, two teens were skinny dipping behind a motor boat when they became affected by the boat exhaust. One of the youths was overcome and submerged into the lake. Both incidents were initially attributed to incorrect causes--a car accident and a drowning--because of the false notion that carbon monoxide is not a hazard in a ventilated area. The carboxyhemoglobin levels in these victims were 78 and 62% respectively. It was only through laboratory testing that carbon monoxide poisoning was identified as the cause of their demise. Physicians as well as the public need to be aware of the potential for this life threatening hazard to occur so that there can be proper emergency treatment and the prevention of fatalities.