



## **Methanol Poisoning Outbreaks in Southern Iran in 2018: A Lesson Learned**

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### **Dear Editor-in-Chief**

Methanol poisoning is one of the risk factors causing death and disability. As mentioned in the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) studies, alcohol consumption was the seventh risk factor for premature deaths and DALYs in 2016, compared to other risk factors (1). Methanol poisoning is also one of the growing health problems in Iran where due to a ban on alcohol consumption and also the fears of its cultural, social and legal consequences, and as a result of non-referral to medical centers, there is no accurate statistics on its morbidity and subsequent mortality rate. This type of poisoning, which is far more difficult to manage than other poisonings, is occurred often due to the use of handmade or contaminated alcoholic beverages.

From September 7, to September 29 in 2018, overall, 768 people were poisoned using handmade alcoholic beverages in the provinces of Alborz, Tehran, Markazi, Fars, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Hormozgan, North Khorasan, and Qazvin. Among whom 57 people were hospitalized and 69 people were died, most of them were young men. The outbreak of poisoning by alcoholic beverages was reported by media in the Hormozgan Province in Oct 2018 due to increased poisoning rates and referrals to hospitals, and the highest number of deaths reported in the

provinces of Alborz (n=25), Hormozgan (n=21), and North Khorasan (n=7) (2).

In order to prevent or minimize the occurrence of alcohol poisoning, in addition to taking individual-level measures, preventive social measures should also be taken requiring government support for taking action at the societal level and formulating policy and action plans at the national or local level (3,4). Therefore, the government and the community should set policies on the agenda of their long-term plans by the help of inter and intra-sectoral organizational collaborations to reduce the youth problem on unemployment and create healthy recreations (5).

One of the important points regarding prevention of alcohol poisoning is to raise public awareness, especially the young generation, as a high-risk group about alcohol poisoning, especially methanol poisoning, which is accomplished through national media, social networks, family education by health centers as well as schools and the academic community. A relevant program is needed to be compiled and taught by relevant specialists at the educational centers. It is possible to identify vulnerable areas in each county, and increase individual's level of tolerance against hardships by establishing counseling centers, workshops, and strengthening beliefs, and etc. so



that they do not be encouraged to use alcoholic beverages in order to forget their problems (1,3). In order to control the outbreaks of methanol poisoning, early detection of outbreaks is important. Therefore, one of the solutions is to find cases through active surveillance. In order to identify and control the outbreaks quickly, especially in counties which are at higher risk, there is a need for a sustainable surveillance system regarding this type of poisoning. It seems that we can investigate and identify the roots of methanol consumption in Iran by launching the national poison data system (4, 6).

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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