
AN ALARMING CALLS: A FATAL CASE OF PEDIATRIC TETANUS

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Tetanus remains a significant public health concern, often associated with substantial morbidity and mortality. It is a condition diagnosed primarily through clinical evaluation since no specific laboratory test is available for confirmation. Despite being preventable by the availability of vaccines, tetanus continues to affect vulnerable populations, particularly children. Early detection and treatment are critical for better outcomes, but diagnosis can be difficult due to the variable presentation and rarity of the condition in countries with high vaccination rates. OBJECTIVE: To describe the clinical characteristics of a severe tetanus case in a child and determine the risk factors. CASE PRESENTATION: This case was received through the Seberang Perai Tengah District Health Office's e-notification system. Then, the patient was identified through hospital records, and information on clinical presentation, diagnosis, and management was gathered and presented descriptively. Patient is an unvaccinated 6-year-old boy presented with generalized abdominal pain, facial pain, inability to open his mouth widely, and reduced oral intake. During hospitalization, he had generalized muscular rigidity and spasms. It was discovered that he had a previous injury and a recent puncture wound on his right big toe. He was diagnosed with tetanus on day four after the initial onset of his symptoms. His condition deteriorated before he was able to complete the recommended dosage of IM Tetanus Immunoglobulin, and subsequently, he succumbed to death one day after being diagnosed. CONCLUSION: Multiple factors have been identified that increase the risk of contracting tetanus and dying. These include the younger age of the patient, incomplete or lack of timely vaccination, inadequate wound care, contaminated wounds or injuries, multiple or profound wounds, as well as delayed diagnosis and treatment. To prevent and effectively treat tetanus in children, timely vaccination, proper wound management, and heightened awareness of tetanus symptoms are essential.

Keywords: Tetanus, children, vaccinated, wound care, risk factors
