

Pesticide Exposure Treatment

Doctors Trained to Manage Pesticide Poisoning



Due to a lack of awareness and application of proper safety measures while handling pesticides, farmers' health in Bangladesh is often unnecessarily put at risk. In cases of exposure to pesticides, farmers need expedient and effective medical attention. Emergency room doctors face many pesticide-exposed patients who need proper medical support within the first hour in order to reduce further health hazards.

All too often doctors have not been properly trained on recognizing symptoms of exposure nor administering treatment properly. To address this challenge, the USAID Agro-Inputs Project in Bangladesh (AIP) is working with agro-enterprise Syngenta Bangladesh Limited to train doctors in using the Government of Bangladesh's certified pesticide exposure medical procedures.

AIP has trained 50 percent of the government doctors who are practicing in the Feed the Future program zone, which operates in 20 districts across southern Bangladesh.

Recent training was provided in the districts of Patuakhali and Barisal on handling pesticide poisoning. Doctors learned how to quickly diagnose and treat pesticide-exposed patients, as well as how to assess the level of exposure. They also learned about issues related to improper handling, mixing, and spraying of chemicals in agriculture, pesticide misuse, and how to minimize the impact of ingestion. In addition, doctors were reminded to counsel patients on the safe use of pesticides to help decrease health risks.

The training proved to be timely and informative for the participants, who frequently handle patients affected by pesticides. One participant, Dr. Fouzia Qader of Patuakhali Sadar Hospital, said "I recently saw a patient facing respiratory problems due to inhaling pesticide while spraying his eggplant field. Normally, we would first have performed a stomach wash, but from today's training, I have learned that these type of patients need to be intubated first in order to normalize the patient's breathing."

Another doctor also shared, "Today I learned that I was treating patients in the wrong manner, which could cost the patient his life."

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In the past, training opportunities for pesticide poisoning have been limited. Patuakhali and Barisal civil surgeons and other medical practitioners remarked, “This training is an innovative step. The training content was very practical and supports doctors’ continuing education.”

USAID/AIP plans to distribute the list of trained medical doctors among its Agro-Input Retailers Network members as a reference guide for farmer customers. The training and networking with the doctors will help farmers receive prompt and appropriate treatment in the future.