

Acute Hepatitis Following Self Administration of Fenbendazole, A Veterinary Anthelmintic.

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Introduction:

Patients frequently seek non-FDA approved treatments for controversial diagnoses. We describe a case of toxicity from internet-procured fenbendazole in a patient self-treating “chronic Lyme disease.”

Case:

A 46-year-old woman presented to the emergency department (ED) with jaundice and pruritus. She had a history of depression, but denied using any prescription medications. In the ED, she admitted to using a “goat dewormer,” fenbendazole, which she purchased on the internet in order to treat her “chronic Lyme disease” and other internal parasites. Two weeks prior, she switched to a formulation with ten times the potency. She also admitted to taking other supplements but had not taken them in over 2 months. In the ED she had unremarkable vital signs, and her physical exam was significant for jaundice, scleral icterus and extensive skin excoriations. Laboratory analysis was revealed a total bilirubin of 5.7 mg/dL, direct bilirubin on 4.3 mg/dL, AST and ALT of 529 U/L and 470 U/L. She was treated with antihistamines and advised to stop all medications. She underwent an extensive workup, including testing for other causes of her hepatic dysfunction, which were negative. She improved and was discharged 2 days later. A liver biopsy was performed and findings were consistent with drug induced liver injury.

Discussion:

“Chronic Lyme disease” is a diagnosis used for patients with pain and neurocognitive symptoms with or without evidence of previous Lyme disease.[1] The diagnosis is not widely accepted in the medical community and patients often turn to the Internet to self-treatment modalities. To the best of our knowledge, there has not been a documented case of acute hepatitis following administration of fenbendazole. Fenbendazole is a member of the benzimidazole class of anthelmintics. Other medications within this class include mebendazole and albendazole. Cases of human hepatotoxicity have been reported within this class of medication, and due to their structural similarities, fenbendazole is likely hepatotoxic as well. [2,3] Unfortunately, serum levels of the drug were unable to be obtained.

Conclusion:

Physicians should be aware of the possibility of patients purchasing veterinary medications on the internet and their adverse reactions and toxicities.