Orellanus Syndrome: A Rare Cause of Uremia

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Table 1. Effect of C. orellanus ingestion on renal function

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<td>(n = 26)</td>
<td>(n=135)</td>
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Dear Sir,

Mushroom poisoning is a rare cause of clinical toxicity. In most cases death results from consumption of Amanita phalloídes (death cap) or closely related species. Ingestion of the genus Cortinarius, particularly Cortinarius orellanus or Cortinarius specio-sissimus may cause acute renal failure [1,2]. The clinical symptoms due to poisoning by C. orellanus were first described in 1957 (orellanus syndrome) [3]. Severe poisoning by Cortinarius species has been reported rarely since then.

A 27-year-old, previously healthy man consumed self-picked wild mushrooms. Nine days later he developed persisting nausea and anorexia. He had noticed a marked reduction in urine volume from the 11th day after eating the mushroom stew. On admission, 14 days after the meal, he was remarkably well, afebrile and anicteric. The pulse rate was 90/min, with normal sinus rhythm. Blood pressure was 160/90 mm Hg and there was uremic factor. Microscopic study of the urine revealed marked leukocyturia (500 cell/µl), but only a small number of red blood cells (10 erythrocytes/µl). Plasma creatinine was 16.4 mg/dl (1.449 µmol/l), urea 353 mg/dl (59 mmol/l), sodium 131 mmol/l, potassium 6.63 mmol/l, and calcium 2.1 mmol/l. Liver function tests, blood cell count and coagulation screening were normal. Circulating anti-dsDNA antibodies, anti-GBM antibodies, anti-TBM antibodies, anti-neu-trophil cytoplasmatic antibodies, rheumatoid factor, anti-streptolysin titer, cryoim-munoglobulins and anti-CMV antibodies were all negative. Serum immunoglobulin

Normal renal function,’ Acute renal failure, % Chronic renal failure, %
concentrations were within the normal range.

Ultrasonography of the kidneys ruled out obstruction as the cause of renal failure. Renal biopsy (light-microscopic studies) revealed pronounced acute tubulo-interstitial nephritis. No glomerular damage was noted. Immunofluorescence studies showed no significant deposition of immunoglobulins, complement or fibrin in the glomeruli.

Hemodialysis was started immediately, but acute renal failure could not be reversed. The patient decided to use continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis and a peritoneal catheter was placed. In
August 1994 he underwent an uneventful kidney transplantation. The kidney transplant still performs well.

Given a history of mushroom ingestion, poisoning by mushrooms can be classified according to the morphology of the ingested mushroom, its principal toxin or its clinical signs and symptoms. In the case presented,

the diagnosis of poisoning by C. orellanus was based on the mushrooms, which were classified by a professional mycologist and on the typical features of the orellanus syndrome.

Clinical symptoms of intoxication with C. orellanus are characterized by a latency period of up to 14 days followed by acute gastroenteritis with nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or constipation. Acute renal failure is the main consequence of intoxication and may lead – as in the case presented – to end-stage renal failure requiring renal replacement therapy. The prolonged latency period may be the reason for categorizing C. orellanus as an eatable mushroom until the 1950s when Gryzmala [3] presented the first evidence of its toxicity.

The main toxin of C. orellanus consists of a byperidine (termed orellanine) which is extremely heat stable and is not inactivated by drying periods of over 20 years [4]. This toxin attacks the proximal tubular cells lead-
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Köppel C: Clinical symptomatology and management of mushroom poisoning. Toxicon 1993;31:1513-1540.
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