



CROCODILE ATTACK USED FOR COMPENSATION- CASE REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Bite marks is a gesture for either love or hatred. But, that of animal is surely a gesture for its survival. Animal bites are not an uncommon encounter in the clinical setup. Most common amongst it is dog bite. Bite by a crocodile is not a routine one. Crocodilians are opportunistic predators that are most dangerous in water and at the water-land interface. (1) The government has sanctioned heavy amounts of compensation in cases of wild animal attacks. Some people are lured towards this compensation and try to mimic another cause of death as to resulting from wild animal attack, by a different storyline.

One such case encountered by the author is described in this report.

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INTRODUCTION

The river bank is used by the population for various purposes of daily household needs and also for fishing to earn livelihood. One such person came across the attack of a crocodile. The Krishna River and its tributaries in Sangli and Kolhapur Districts, southern Maharashtra has a breeding population of mugger crocodiles *Crocodylus palustris*, which have caused attacks on humans and livestock in recent years. (2)

A 42 years old male was rushed to the casualty of Civil Hospital, attached to the medical college, with history of attack by a crocodile. He was having some injuries over the body. He was declared brought dead at the casualty and the body was shifted to mortuary for postmortem examination.

Observation

Clothes over the body were wet with water. Hairs of scalp were wet, skin of hand & feet were soddened. Froth coming from the nostrils noted. No other injury except those depicted in images was noted.

On internal examination, on dissection of thoracic cavity; froth in the respiratory tract, edematous lungs, oozing of froth on squeezing the lung. On dissection of abdominal cavity; water noted inside the stomach. The internal findings were suggestive of drowning.

DISCUSSION

Attacks on human beings by various animals leading to varied types of injuries and even death in some cases are not uncommon. Crocodile attacks on humans have been reported

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from a number of countries across the globe. Deaths in such attacks are mostly due to mechanical injuries or drowning. (3)

In this case the punctured wound over the right thigh was present in a row with depth of varying dimension and consistent with crocodile bite, but the margins of the wound were not bleeding. Also there was no sign of any defence wound over the body. Thus these injuries were post-mortem in nature.

After ascertaining this fact, the investigation of police with the accompanies of deceased led to the actual fact. The accompanied persons saw the body in the river floating, by the time they came to rescue the body, a crocodile attacked on the body, but immediately left it by hearing the shouts of the public. They also added that they created the history of crocodile attack luring to the compensation attached to such incident.

The government has increased the compensation given to victims of attacks by wild animals. A government order states that the compensation in case of death of a person due to attack by wild animals has been hiked to Rs.10 lakh. The compensation, in case of the victim suffering a permanent handicap in such attacks, would be Rs.5 lakh while those getting seriously injured would be given Rs.1.25 lakh. In cases of people sustaining minor injuries, the compensation will be for medical treatment. If the treatment needs to be carried out in private hospitals, then the compensation for this per person shall have an upper limit of Rs.20 thousand. The list of wild animals, as per the order, comprises tigers, leopards, bears, bison, wild boars, fox, hyena, crocodile, elephants, wild dogs and wolves. Crocodilians are opportunistic predators that are most dangerous in water and at the water-land interface. (1)



Image 1 Puncture wound marks over anterior aspect of right thigh of various depths, S/O Crocodile bite marks.



Image 2 Puncture wound marks on the postero-lateral aspect of right thigh, of varying depth, S/O Crocodile bite marks.

Warning signs posted near waterways should be heeded.⁽⁶⁾

If camping near bodies of water that contain crocodiles, camp should be set up some distance from the water's edge, and individuals should be particularly careful about venturing near the water. Water should be collected from a different spot each time, and no food scraps (e.g. fish carcasses) that may attract crocodiles should be left behind. Swimming or wading should be avoided.

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CONCLUSION

Pertaining to this case, it is very important to be vigilant in recording the injuries. Differentiation between Antemortem and postmortem is crucial as to decide the circumstance of incident. Equally important is the pattern of associated findings.

A number of precautions can be taken to avoid adverse interactions with crocodiles.^(4&5) If venturing into areas that may contain crocodiles, it is advisable to contact the local wildlife authorities beforehand for relevant information about crocodiles in the area.

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