

# ALCOHOL PROVOKED FATHER-SON ASSAULT: A CASE REPORT FROM NEPAL

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## ABSTRACT

Although a causal relationship between alcohol and violence is established, the actual number of alcohol related violence are seldom reported. Consumption of alcohol is part of ritual or ceremony in indigenous communities in Nepal. However, alcohol related domestic violence are rarity in Nepalese scenario. This may be because alcohol related domestic assaults and violence are usually 'secreted' and seldom published. We present a case of father-son alcohol related aggression for its unusualness of site and pattern.

## KEYWORDS

Aggression, alcohol, domestic violence, Nepal.



## INTRODUCTION

Consumption of alcohol is not only linked to liver pathology but also in crimes. US department of Justice stated in their 1998 report that alcohol was involved in four out of ten violent crimes.<sup>1</sup> Studies have shown a causal relationship between alcohol and violence. The actual number of alcohol related violence may be far higher than what statistics show because alcohol related domestic assaults and violence are usually 'secreted' and rarely comes into notice. The other reason might be sparse reporting in medical literatures from Nepal. Injuries inflicted upon influence of alcohol are not uncommon. A case of father-son alcohol related violence is presented here for unusualness of the injury site and pattern.

## CASE REPORT

A 34-years-old male was presented to Emergency Department, with a wound over left elbow [Figure 1]. The history provided initially by the patient's mother was he fell of the tree while cutting fodder for the cattle. The history was not convincing to explain the nature and type of injury sustained. Later it was known that the patient's father (aged 55 years) tried to chop his son's neck with a sickle over some family dispute under the influence of alcohol. The blow was blocked by the son with left hand as a consequence of which he sustained cut fracture of the left elbow joint. It was open comminuted fracture of left olecranon process, AO Type B [Figure 2]. Thorough wound washing was done and tetanus immunization administered. Open reduction and internal fixation with plate and screws was done. Tension band wiring was also done for radial head. Above elbow posterior slab was done. The skin closure was done with sutures which was removed after two weeks. Passive range of exercises were started from 8 weeks and active range of motion exercises from 12 weeks post operatively.



**Figure 1:** The defense wound sustained following a blow by sickle over left elbow joint.



**Figure 2:** Communitated fracture of left olecranon process, AO Type B.

## DISCUSSION

The victim sustained injury and was hospitalized for treatment. The cost of the treatment and hospital stay was born by the family. The family was socioeconomically not so rich and the medical procedures got them into debts. When we look in to the root cause it was alcohol that created a mishap in this family. Most of the indigenous Nepalese, prepare 'Rakshi', (ethnic alcoholic liquor) at home. It is prepared by traditional fermented 'Marcha', (culture starter) which consists of saccharifying molds, fermentative yeast, and acidifying lactic acid.<sup>2</sup> Rakshi is prepared from rice, grains or fruits. It is cheap and easily available locally. Consumption of alcohol is part of ritual or ceremony in indigenous communities. Further, it is not taken as a beverage but as a constituent of normal diet. The feeling of instant power after consumption boosts the morale for the risk-taking activities like heavy weight lifting, climbing high trees for fodder and going down steep slope for grass etc. However, violence and crimes linked with alcohol should not be overlooked. Miller et al., in a study concluded that sons of aggressive and abusive father were more likely to engage in male to male alcohol related aggression (MMARA).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it was opined that there is a high chance that sons of abusive father engage in violence towards female intimates. Government and non-governmental private organizations have been regularly conducting awareness campaigns educating people of deleterious effects of alcohol and to limit its use. However, if the person himself/herself doesn't realize, such campaigns are ineffective.

In Nepal, most of the families follow the norms of patriarchal society. In patriarchal society the males are considered bread winner and females the home maker. Fathers are supposed to be role model for their children. It is believed that father or fatherly figure contribute to the psychosocial development of the children without whom they become aggressive and violent when they attain adolescent age.<sup>3,4</sup> In the present case, the father under the influence of alcohol tried to kill his son with a sickle. This is a form of '*Laius Complex*' over some family dispute and involvement of alcohol. The son however defended the blow to sustain a grievous injury over his left elbow. If

parents abuse their children physically or verbally; the child will have the reluctance to go near such parents. They feel hated and neglected in the family. When these children grow up as adults, they will not have much respect and love for their abusive parents. It has been observed, majority of old age people in old age home in Nepal were abused at their homes and were forced to live in such shelters.<sup>5</sup> If children are not taught love and compassion at an early age, when they grow adults, they will not take care of their old aged parents. We cannot deny the fact that children might take revenge of their childhood abuse when they become adults. Abuse at an early age might also be one of the reasons young adolescents run away from home and end up living in the streets.

When the son was presented to the emergency department with an injury, the hospital police was informed. Upon inquiry the father happened to be perpetrator and the son victim. But other family members wanted to settle down the case on mutual understanding as it was a family issue. Case was not filed. Had the case been filed the father would have been behind bars and serving jail term for attempted homicide. Societal stigma and family pressure were the barriers for justice being served in the present case. A criminal is not convicted and the son is victimized.

From the mother's perspective, it is still a hard decision to make. She cannot bear her son being battered or victimized, neither can have her husband behind bars. When she and

her husband get old and cannot earn their livelihood they have to rely and depend upon their son. She cannot abandon her husband whom she had been married for 36 years nor can she leave her son. And in such a scenario it is very difficult to get them live together under the same roof.

In a country like Nepal, where Hindu tradition is more prevalent, the son doesn't live separately rather lives with parents as part of joint family; unlike many other countries where child moves out of parent's home after gaining adulthood to live independently. Inheritance of family/ancestral property and living under same roof are the societal norms here. However, if the son is battered by father with a malicious intent to kill, how psychologically disturbed the son would be?

## CONCLUSION

Influence of alcohol plays a role in aggression. Alcohol linked domestic violence not only impose financial burden to the family but also has psychological impact and social concerns. Although it may seem that in some families' consumption of alcohol is socialization and merry making, many at times aggression related to it has a deleterious effect not only upon physical health but also the psychosocial well being of fellow family member.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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