Cardiac Arrest After Intentional Pentobarbital Overdose
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Introduction:
• Pentobarbital is a long acting barbiturate (t ½ 4-50 hours)
• FDA approved uses: Anesthesia adjunct, Insomnia, Sedation, Seizure
• No longer available as an oral formulation in the United States

• Capital Punishment
• 2010 EU banned exportation of thiopental sodium to US
• March 10, 2011 Ohio becomes first state to use pentobarbital-only euthanasia

• Exit International
• Australian organization established in 1997
• Promotes a “non-medical approach to a person’s right to determine the time and manner of their passing.”

• The Peaceful Pill Handbook
• Pentobarbital ‘Nembuta’ supported as an option for suicide

Case Report
Pre-Hospital Course
• 61-year-old male was brought in by ambulance after an unwitnessed cardiac arrest.
• Patient was found down in a hotel room pulseless and apneic after last being seen normal 12 hours prior
• On EMS arrival:
  • Patient was intubated
  • The patient was defibrillated once, followed by 2 rounds of epinephrine and CPR with return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC)

ED Course
VS: BP 107/94, HR 89 (removed HD #25), RR 14, 97% BVM, 27.5°C
• Neuro: GCS 3, Pupils dilated and non reactive
No rectal tone
• Additional V. Fib arrest in the ED Defibrillation x 3 at 200J to achieve ROSC
• Epinephrine drip for pressor support
• Cooling protocol to maintain hypothermia

Initial Labs:

| Lactate: 1.8 | APAP: < 2.0 μg/mL |
| ASA: < 10 μg/dL | ETOH: < 10 |
| Urine Tox: +Barbiturates, +THC | Phenobarbital: 2.9 μg/mL |

Pentobarbital level: 22.4 mcg/mL
Pentobarbital level: 6.1 mcg/mL

Hypotension
Hypoxemia
Hypokalemia
Hypothermia

Course Continued

The patient may have taken up to 5 grams

Hospital Day Clinical Status Interventions
#1 Persistent lactic acidosis Hypothermia Cooling maintained Epinephrine for pressor support
#3 Cardiac arrhythmias Hypoxemia Rewarming initiated Pentobarbital level: 22.4 mcg/mL
#6 Off pressors MRI brain normal Pentobarbital level: 6.1 mcg/mL
#8 Patient Exublated Placed on BiPAP weaned successfully
#9 - 24 R sided empyema Placed on BiPAP Pleural drain placed (removed HD #25)
# 25 Patient discharged home without neurologic sequela

References:

Conclusions:
Overdose of Pentobarbital is rare given oral Pentobarbital is no longer prescribed in the United States, however, Pentobarbital may still be purchased online.
• Pentobarbital overdose may results in cardiopulmonary arrest and prolonged coma.