



Ripped From the Headlines...RICIN POISONING

It began just like an average day. The year was 1978, and exiled Bulgarian broadcaster Georgi Markov was waiting patiently on a London street corner for his bus. Suddenly, he felt a painful stab in the back of his thigh. This incident caused Markov to develop severe symptoms, and he died after just three days.

Twenty-five years later, six people are arrested in southern England on suspicion of producing a highly potent and deadly poison in an underground London lab.

What do these two stories have in common? The toxin described in each is ricin, a deadly cytotoxic compound extracted from the castor bean, or *ricinus communis*. The highest concentrations of ricin are found in the tiny brown seeds of the castor bean. Although the contents of one seed is enough to kill a child, death rarely occurs because oral absorption of ricin is poor. However, ricin can be easily aerosolized and is receiving vast attention today as a potential weapon. The high potency of the toxin makes it especially attractive for this use. The volume of ricin allegedly responsible for Georgi Markov's death was only 0.28 mm³.

If orally ingested, ricin usually produces gastrointestinal symptoms in about six hours. If ricin is inhaled by or injected into victims of warfare, death may occur within 36-72 hours. Initial symptoms of inhaled ricin include fever, cough, and respiratory distress, leading to pulmonary edema and hypoxia. Victims of injected ricin also experience fever and an elevated white blood cell count, which may lead to shock.

No antidote for ricin poisoning currently exists. Treatment consists of activated charcoal for decontamination in oral exposures, and aggressive fluid and electrolyte replacement along with appropriate supportive care for symptomatic patients.

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DID YOU KNOW THAT..... Ancom Anti-Hypertensive Compound Tablets have been recalled?

Ancom is an unapproved new drug being sold via the internet by Herbsland Inc. It is labeled to contain reserpine, diazepam, promethazine and hydrochlorothiazide. This combination of drugs poses health risks including sedation, depression, and hematologic abnormalities.

The recall includes all lots of the product.



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