

Correspondence

Priapism following oral sildenafil abuse

Worldwide clinical trials have not reported any case of priapism following the use of sildenafil citrate for erectile dysfunction. Subsequently, this complication was reported during clinical use for which combination therapy was implicated.¹

A 25-year-old man, who had normal erectile function, consumed sildenafil citrate without prescription. He presented to our hospital with a history of persistent, painful, rigid penile erection of 12 days' duration. There was no prior history of priapism, erectile dysfunction or sickle cell disease or trait. The patient had procured one 50 mg tablet of sildenafil citrate 'over the counter' prior to visiting a commercial sex worker. Erection occurred 2 hours after ingesting the tablet but detumescence did not occur after ejaculation. Over the next 12 days the patient had sexual intercourse several times with no detumescence. The erection was initially associated with only mild pain but had increased in the 3 days prior to his presenting to us. On examination, he had a rigid penile erection, and aspiration from the corpora cavernosa yielded dark blood. Blood gas analysis revealed low oxygen content consistent with ischaemic priapism. Peripheral blood film morphology was normal. Corporal irrigation and aspiration was performed but detumescence could not be achieved. An Al-Ghorab glanulo-corporal shunt was performed with partial detumescence. The patient has developed erectile dysfunction and implantation of a penile prosthesis is planned for his condition.

Priapism as a complication of oral sildenafil citrate has rarely been seen in patients with erectile dysfunction and has been associated with a high dose (100–200 mg),^{2,3} sickle cell trait⁴ or dihydrocodeine ingestion.⁵ However, priapism due to sildenafil in men without erectile dysfunction has never been reported. Easy availability of the drug as well as wide publicity has created a potential for its abuse by ill-informed men who may consider it an aphrodisiac and 'pay the price' as in this case.

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