

PEDIATRIC LEPIDOPTERISM DUE TO HYLESIA METABUS IN A NORTHEASTERN REGION OF VENEZUELA (CAJIGAL, SUCRE)

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Human poisoning by Lepidoptera has been known to physicians since old times. In the last years, several factors have been causative of a great number of contacts between different stages of these insects and humans, occasionally with epidemic features. *Hylesia metabus* (Saturniidae family) is of medical interest in Venezuela. An urticarial dermatosis after contact with the urticating hairs of the adult female *Hylesia* moth may occur by several mechanisms including the intradermal injection of inflammatory mediators through the urticating hairs, but may be also affected eyes and respiratory tract. Histamine has been implicated as the main mediator responsible for the urticarial lesions seen after contact with *Hylesia* moths. Epidemiology of *Hylesia* lepidopterism in venezuelan children has been not described previously. For these reasons we describe epidemiology of pediatric lepidopterism in a northeastern region of Venezuela (Cajigal, Sucre). Until 1995 we documented 35 cases of lepidopterism in children (representing 73% of cases in the region), 57.14% were male and 42.86% female, with a mean age of 3.94 \pm 4.13 year-old (37.14% belong to group of 2-6 year-old, pre-scholar [P=0.03]). Allmost patients were from Yaguaraparo (45.83%, P<0.001) a location with ecological conditions to developing of *Hylesia* moths. Additionally to skin lesions, one patient presented conjunctivitis and 11.43% acute bronchitis. Current report showed first pediatric epidemiologic data on *H.metabus* lepidopterism in Sucre, Venezuela. At this moment, Ministry of Health is implementing a Control & Surveillance Program for *Hylesia* in Venezuela, to maintain close epidemiologic and entomologic vigilance of this important public health problem in Paria's Gulf.

