

## ELAPIDIC ENVENOMATION: CLINICAL FEATURES

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The coral snakes, which belong to the *Micrurus* genus and Elapidae family, rarely determine accidents in human beings in Brazil. According to data of the Health Ministry, of 20,884 notified snakes accidents, in the whole country, between June 1986 and December 1987, only 0.7% (141) of the accidents were determined by snakes of this genus, and the lethality coefficient observed was 0.7%<sup>1</sup>

Coral snake venom is neurotoxic, acting on the neuromuscular junction. It determines a *myasthenia gravis*-like syndrome, of variable intensity<sup>3,4</sup>. Initially, the patient may develop vomiting and mild local pain, usually followed by local paresthesia and myalgia with proximal progression tendency. Posteriorly, progressive muscular weakness may develop, with palpebral ptosis, external ophthalmoplegia, respiratory difficulties, dysphagia, mandibular ptosis, flaccid paralysis affecting the neck, trunk and limbs.<sup>2,4,5,6</sup>

In these accidents, in addition to antivenom and adequate ventilatory support, when determined by *M. frontalis*, whose neurotoxin competes with acetylcholine at the end-plate receptors of the neuromuscular junction, pharmacologic treatment with anticholinesterase drugs is possible.<sup>2,3,4,5,6</sup>

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