Medical Line Trachinus Araneus Warning!

Barcelona, September 26th 2011

Hi, this is just to communicate and report an accident that I suffered last Saturday (Sept 17th). I was snorkelling in the Castelldefels beach (near Barcelona), 20 m away from the shore and in 2 m deep water. I saw a group of three spotted weevers (Trachinus Araneus) in the sandy bottom, and the group split. I then dove down about 1.5 m to see one of them a little bit closer and then the fish suddenly jumped out very quickly off the sand and hit my face and cheek) and chest (two times) with its poison ours fins, attacking me directly. I was not wearing any wetsuit or protection, just mask, snorkel and fins. I was extremely surprised by the aggressive behaviour of the fish… it was a very, very painful experience. I got out of the water, bleeding, and rushed to a local emergency service in the hospital. I was treated there on Saturday, and on Sunday in a Barcelona hospital as well, as inflammation was increasing. I got urgency treatment and received everything (morphine, voltaren, etc), antibiotic (Amoxycillyn) and Enantyum (antiinflammatory).

Now the pain is almost gone, and I'm recovering well from a very large inflammation in face and chest. I'm visiting a National Health Service toxicologist doctor in Barcelona again tomorrow, for a final check. So in general, I have had no personal expenses. What I would like first of all is for DAN to record the accident, and then if possible to have a campaign about how dangerous is this fish in the Mediterranean, and how careful should be everybody when snorkelling or diving near one of those Trachinus Araneus. I think the risk and the consequences (the amount of pain is unimaginable, and death is possible, I understand) well deserve the effort. Another improvement area should be for hospitals to know well about the protocol and the heat application, this is important to ease the pain and not so easy to obtain in an emergency service.
Thanks,

Daniel Fuhrmann Verdaguer
Barcelona (Spain)

The weever fish: know it to avoid it

Weever fish are Osteichthyes of to the Trachinidae family. Of average size, between 20 and 50 cm long, they are widespread in the temperate and cold waters of the Mediterranean, North Atlantic and North Sea. They are the most venomous fish in this marine area. One of the most common and populous species is the spotted weever (Trachinus araneus), only found in the Mediterranean.

Weevers typically inhabit flat and sandy seabeds, lying half-buried in the sand or mud, with just their heads visible, constantly lurking for prey. They are often very aggressive, earning them the Old Saxon name "viper of the sea". Great to eat, these fish have to be handled very prudently, each having anything between 5 and 7 venomous dorsal spines as well as an opercular spine, just as venomous, next to the gill openings, on both sides. Their erectile dorsal fins can also act as a great defence, against being trodden on and against predators.

Weever fish use their venomous apparatus to attack prey or fish which invade its territory. Divers have reported being attacked and stung by weevers just by having gone too close to their hiding places.

The action of the weever's poison is haemolytic and neurotoxic. The predominating initial subjective clinical symptom is pain: instant, burning pain which spreads rapidly from the area stung, usually a lower limb, right up to the root of the limb. The pain peaks after 20-30 minutes and can in some cases last for

more than 24 hours, even a few days even though lessened. The initial intensity of the pain and its immediateness can cause delirium and a syncopal attack, bringing the consequent risk of drowning for swimmers and divers. Local anaesthesia and analgesics are generally not very effective – it is more useful to immediately place the stung limb in very hot water, as hot as is bearable. There is no specific antidote in commerce: that's why the only option is symptomatic and adequate treatment, case by case adapted to the needs of the victim. Antibiotic coverage and anti-tetanus jabs are obligatory.

From giving First Aid to teaching it: First Aid for Hazardous Marine Life Injuries

The DAN course in First Aid for Hazardous Marine Life Injuries is an initial training level to instruct divers (and qualified non-divers) on how to identify dangerous forms of marine life, how to recognise the injuries caused by them and how to provide first aid for them.?

Course Objective

The Objective of this course is to train anyone interested in first aid techniques how to handle an injury suspected to be caused by a dangerous marine animal. The course also deals with how to recognise potentially dangerous marine life-forms and how to prevent injury by them. This programme provides an excellent possibility of continuing with one's underwater education, both for experts and instructors.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this programme, participants will be able to:

- identify the four types of lesions caused by dangerous marine organisms
- name at least five species of venomous animals
- name at least five signs of poisoning from sting/bite/urtication
- describe the appropriate first aid techniques for lesions from venomous marine animals
- name at least three marine animals that may bite a scuba diver
- name two common signs of bites
- describe the appropriate first aid techniques for bites from marine animals
- name at least three kinds of marine animals that can cause irritation
- name at least four signs of irritation
- describe the appropriate first aid techniques for irritations from marine animals
- identify two forms of food poisoning from "marine" food
- name at least three kinds of animals that can cause food poisoning
- name three common signs of food poisoning
- explain why a doctor's opinion is necessary in cases of suspected food poisoning
- describe the appropriate first aid techniques in a case of suspected food poisoning
- carry out an environmental safety assessment
- name the steps taken in assessing environmental safety
- carry out ABC First Aid (airways, breathing and circulation) for an injured diver
- show the correct behaviour in treating sick or injured divers
- open airways and keep them open, keep an injured diver breathing (artificial respiration)
- describe the importance of the use of supplemental oxygen as a first aid measure for injured scuba divers
- show the techniques for controlling a haemorrhage, including direct pressure (pressure immobilization, lifting the injured part) and the pressure points
- localize and show a pressure point to control an external haemorrhage
- apply dressings and bandages for lesions caused by hazardous marine animals

- show how to carry out a secondary evaluation and how to treat for shock
- demonstrate pressure immobilisation techniques
- name the components of the Emergency Assistance Plan
- describe at least five techniques or guidelines to reduce the risk of lesion by marine animal.

The nature and aim of the course are limited to the training of scuba divers, as well as those, such as boat captains, friends or relatives that may have an interest in recognising potentially harmful marine animals, in the first aid treatment and in the prevention of injury by these animals. The course does not include CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) or water rescuing. The scope of application is for after the victim has been taken in and placed on the beach or onboard.