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The protective effect of *Mucuna pruriens* seeds against snake venom poisoning.

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Abstract

ETHNOPHARMACOLOGICAL RELEVANCE: The seed, leaf and root of *Mucuna pruriens* have been used in traditional medicine for treatments of various diseases. In Nigeria, the seed is used as oral prophylactics for snakebite. **AIM OF THE STUDY:** To study the protective effects of *Mucuna pruriens* seed extract against the lethalities of various snake venoms. **MATERIALS AND METHODS:** Rats were pre-treated with *Mucuna pruriens* seed extract and challenged with various snake venoms. The effectiveness of anti-*Mucuna pruriens* (anti-MPE) antibody to neutralize the lethalities of snake venoms was investigated by in vitro neutralization. **RESULTS:** In rats, MPE pre-treatment conferred effective protection against lethality of *Naja sputatrix* venom and moderate protection against *Calloselasma rhodostoma* venom. Indirect ELISA and immunoblotting studies showed that there were extensive cross-reactions between anti-MPE IgG and venoms from many different genera of poisonous snakes, suggesting the involvement of immunological neutralization in the protective effect of MPE pre-treatment against snake venom poisoning. In vitro neutralization experiments showed that the anti-MPE antibodies effectively neutralized the lethalities of Asiatic cobra (*Naja*) venoms, but were not very effective against other venoms tested. **CONCLUSIONS:** The anti-MPE antibodies could be used in the antiserum therapy of Asiatic cobra (*Naja*) bites.

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