# BODY PACKING OF ILLICIT DRUGS (AN INCIDENTAL RADIOLOGICAL DIAGNOSIS)

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## BACKGROUND

Body packing first described in 1973 is smuggling of illicit drugs using human body as a vehicle[1]. Drugs are usually wrapped in water proof capsules are either concealed within the skin, ingested orally or directly inserted into the body cavities such as rectum and vagina.

Body Packers: who ingest packets

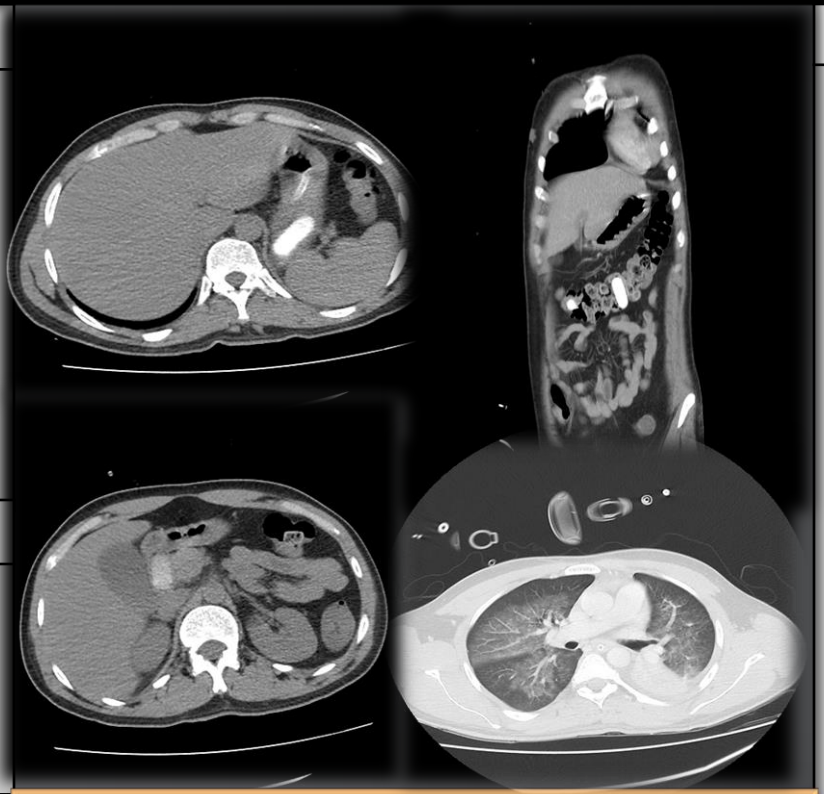
Body Pushers: who insert packets in body orifices like rectum or vaginal cavity.[2]

Body Packer syndrome: due to systemic complications.

## CASE PRESENTATION

31-year-old drowsy looking male, with history of Mawa (chewing tobacco) addiction presented with the complains of fever (1 day), constipation (4 days), severe abdominal pain and altered level of consciousness.

On CT scan chest and abdomen large hyperdense capsules were noted within stomach, duodenum and colon with largest measuring 3.5cm in length (150-400 Hounsfield Unit), representing body packing of drugs. Capsules in duodenum appear less dense than others suggesting their disintegration resulting lung edema. Thus patient was diagnosed as complicated case of body packing which is not very common Urine analysis was positive for opiates.



A. Unenhanced CT scan axial section showing large hyperdense capsule in stomach B. Unenhanced Coronal section showing another capsule in transverse colon C. Unenhanced axial section showing relatively hypodense capsule representing disintegration of drugs D. On Lung window settings patchy opacities seen bilateral lung fields.

## CONCLUSION

Body packing of illicit drugs is a universal problem. Patients are usually asymptomatic and not easily diagnosed. Radiological imaging can help in early diagnosis. Complications are rare but can often lead to the death as in this patient, who could not survive due to systemic disease.

## DISCUSSION

Radiological imaging is essential for diagnosis. Sensitivity of conventional radiographs ranges 40% to 90% depending of type of drug and foiling material[2, 3]. CT scan without contrast has sensitivity of 95.6%-100%. [3]

Imaging is usually followed by urine analysis for toxicology for confirmation. Density of body packing drugs on CT scan depend on the their types[4] opium: ~165-200 HU , cocaine: ~220 HU, heroin: ~520 HU. If disintegrated due to improper or ruptured packaging, drugs appear less dense. Our case is unique in a way that , patient had multiple capsules in body with some of them showing imaging evidences of disintegration. Limited literature is available on imaging appearances of these drugs.

## REFERENCES

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