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AFTER ITS BAN, PARAQUAT (PQ) CONTINUES CIRCULATING IN SANTA CATARINA: EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PROFILE OF PQ EXPOSURES (2021–2024) AND RELATIONSHIP WITH MEDIA-REPORTED SEIZURES

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RESUMO

INTRODUCTION: Paraquat (PQ), a highly toxic pesticide, was banned in Brazil in 2017 with a three-year phase-out. However, by 2020, it remained the fifth most used pesticide in Santa Catarina. Ongoing intoxication cases suggest continued illegal circulation. **OBJECTIVE:** To describe the epidemiological profile of PQ exposure in SC and assess its relationship with reported illegal seizures after the ban. **METHODS:** Retrospective observational study using CIATox/SC records (2021–2024). Data on PQ seizures were obtained through structured searches of Santa Catarina media portals with a librarian support. **RESULTS:** After the ban, 49 PQ exposure cases were recorded in Santa Catarina, increasing from 12 (2021) to 18 (2024). In partnership with LPTox II, a qualitative urine test was performed; most cases ($n = 33$; 67.3%) had no laboratory analysis. Among those tested ($n = 13$; 26.5%), PQ was detected in 6 (46.2%). Cases predominated in adults aged 30–39 years ($n = 14$; 28.6%) and in men ($n = 41$; 83.7%). Reported circumstances included suicide attempts (44.9%), occupational exposure (32.7%), and accidents (20.4%). Among cases with known outcomes, 11 (30.5%) resulted in death. Geographically, cases clustered in the Norte (40.8%), Vale do Itajaí (20.4%), and Oeste (18.3%) mesoregions. All 18 identified seizures occurred in these regions, with the highest frequency in the Oeste ($n = 9$). Argentina was the main entry route (44.4%); however, the largest single seizure (24,000 L) originated from China and occurred in the Norte. **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:** PQ exposure persists in SC despite the ban and is associated with illegal circulation. Strengthening toxicovigilance and border control is essential to reduce availability and prevent deaths.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Paraquat, Pesticides, Epidemiology

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