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Editorial

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Solpugidophobia in Iran: Real or Illusion

Rouhullah Dehghani*

Social Determinants of Health (SDH) Research Center and Department of Environment Health, Kashan University of Medical Sciences, Kashan, Iran

*Correspondence should be addressed to Rouhullah Dehghani, Social Determinants of Health (SDH) Research Center and Department of Environment Health, Kashan University of Medical Sciences, Kashan, Iran; Tel: +983155540111; Fax: +983155540111; Email: dehghani37@yahoo.com.

ABSTRACT

Many reports have shown the fear of Solpugids in Iran. Solpugids are not poisonous, but because of morphological characteristics and behaviors, have caused panic in people. Large portion of this fear is unreal; because most of the people are not aware of the details of these animals life. Another part of phobia may be related to psychological or mental characteristics of people. Therefore, paying attention to this issue has a special importance.

Key words: Phobia, Real, Illusion, Solpugids.

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1. MAIN LETTER

Having fear and anxiety is necessary in any animal, for their survival. In humans, fear cause they behave reliable and safe. The nature of anxieties and fears changes with increasing age and learning knowledge. Fear or phobia of animals such as snakes, Zoophobia, Herpetophobia (1-6), scorpions, arachnids, Archnophobia, insects and Entomophobia is common (7-10). Entomophobia is an unusual fear of insects that may cause psychological problems in individuals at critical situation, which needs effective treatment (11). If these feelings of fear and anxiety be stable, may affect people's mental health. Anxiety caused by fear, will have long-term effects. Fear of arachnids and insects is different in various groups of ages, jobs and genders (12). Comparing with men, women are more plagued by this type of fear. More than eighty percent of all reported cases of archno-phobia were observed in females (13). This fear sometimes is real and sometimes unreal or delusory. Due to probable damages of some arthropods, fear of them is true in humans, but in some cases it is along with superstition and false ideas or psychogenic. Sometimes the fear has psychological origin and its continuation may cause serious psychological problems. For removing any fear its origin should be identified. For example, superstitious thought of people about Solpugids in some parts of Iran is completely wrong. In some countries, Solpugids are known as Sun spiders, wind spiders, Child of the Earth and Camel

spider. About 74 species of this animal have been identified in Iran (14). Solpugids are bigger than spiders, and unlike spiders do not have any poisonous glands. Some reports have shown that during Iran-Iraq war, some warriors and soldiers fear of solpugids was more than their fear of bullets and mortar of the enemy. These false rumors are common in some parts of the world, for example in Middle East, there are many rumors about solpugids among the public, they believe that these creatures run as fast as a human, are venomous predator and eat camels' stomach or sleeping soldiers (15). There are many legends and rumors about solpugids, which are certainly due to people's ignorance. This matter shows that awareness and knowledge of people about the biology and behavior of these animals are very in low level and have public aspects. Chelicers or mouthparts of solpugids have great growth and gave him scary appearance. There is an Egyptian giant solpugid with a body reaching up to 15 cm in length and has powerful Chelicers (15). Solpugids as large as Egyptian giant have been seen in the south of Iran (Figure 1). In Iran, people believe that these animals fall from above on people and bite them and causing death. People believe that solpugids are very spiteful and take revenge. In this regard, they say that this creature hides somewhere in the house after biting people and waits for transfer of the bodies of his victims out of house, and after that return to his nest with peace of mind (15). In contrast to the thought of people, solpugids are lacke of sting and poison

glands. Sometimes they take aggressive style and generate some voices for defense. It is also possible solpugids bite for defense and cause the ulcer. This wound contamination may cause infection with soil microbial agents. Solpugids are predator and feed on insects, scorpions and small animals (4). Lack of awareness about the biology of this animal has led to this unreal phobia, which was in most of the people from the distant past. My observations and experiences during nearly 28 years as a teacher showed that more than 95% of students, fear of solpugids before entomology course, but after passing that course, the fear

reduces considerably. Therefore, education can destroy false fear of these creatures. Providing educational programs are effective in this case (16-19). The mass media have an important role in this regard. In various countries, training clubs are provided to reduce or eliminate the fear of these creatures. Since public awareness about the behaviors and characteristics of this animals are low (20). Therefore, education through the mass media can reduce people's ignorance about these animals. By reducing public Solpugidophobia or Archnophobia, mental health of people can be increased.



Figure 1. Two big species of solpugids in Kashan central of Iran (photo prepared by author)

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this paper.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Professor Rouhullah Dehghani has joined to Kashan University Of Medical Sciences as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Environment Health in the College of Health. Prior to coming to College of Health, He was a Lecturer at the College of Medicine the University. He has 28 years of experience in education until now. Rouhullah received his B.S in Plant protection from University of Urmia in 1984 and his M.S.P.H in 1989 and Ph.D in 2003 from the Tehran University of Medical Sciences. Rouhullah's teaching interests include training venomous animals and Medical Entomology. His primary research interests are in the field of venomous animals and biology and ecology of them. He has collaborated on several projects in his interest field at Kashan University of Medical Sciences, which is a national online resource. He has written about 165 articles and published 6 books, up to now (April 5, 2017). He has been a presenter at numerous conferences and workshops on venomous animals and control of them, at the local, state and national level. His Scopus ID : 22834399200.



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