

CONTRIBUTIONS ...

MARINE ANIMALS ...

nematocysts into the skin of the victim. Most stings are quite painful and often irritating. A wide variety of rashes may be produced. Treatment consist of inactivating undischarged nematocysts with some form of alcohol, and the pain of the sting is usually reduced by the application of a 5% lignocaine cream or ointment. Systemic use of antihistamines is indicated if the patient has other than purely local reactions. Some badly shocked patients have responded rapidly to antihistamines given intravenously. Identification of many marine "stingers" has been greatly helped by recent publications.

Octopuses

Only the blue-ringed octopus (Figure 2) is considered dangerous to man. This quite small octopus is very common around the whole coast of Australia and is frequently found in small rock pools or in empty drink cans or shells in shallow water. At rest it is light brown in colour, but when disturbed or taken out of the water it develops dark brown bands all over its body. Scattered over these bands or patches are irregular brilliant blue rings. The octopus is probably harmless in the water, but if picked up and carried along the beach it tends to bite with its small, parrot-like beak, which is situated at the junction of its eight arms. The saliva, which contains an extremely potent neurotoxin, is forced into the wound, and a flaccid paralysis can develop within minutes. The neurotoxin specifically blocks nerve conduction, but tends to wear off after several hours. Treatment consists of prolonged and adequate ventilation. The clinical situation is similar to that of a conscious patient receiving a dose of a curare-like drug. Children, in particular, should be instructed never to pick up these very attractive little creatures.

Stinging Fish

At least 20 distinct types of stinging fish occur in Australian waters. The sharp spines of these fish, which

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are usually multiple, are associated with venom glands. Even lightly grazing the skin with the spines may produce severe pain. In fact stinging fish and severe pain are often synonymous. Little is known of the venom of the various stinging fish; however, a specific antivenene is available for the stings of stone fish (Figure 2). In general the treatment for miscellaneous fish stings is bathing the affected area in hot water (up to 50°C) and local injection of lignocaine or perhaps emetine. The victim may be almost hysterical with pain and/or be profoundly shocked. Strong analgesia may be indicated. The stone fish venom is the only one of the stinging fish venoms known to be cardiotoxic. However, at least one cardiac death has been precipitated by a stinging fish other than a stone fish in a patient with preexisting cardiac insufficiency.

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VESSEL CHANGES, ADMISSIONS, DEPARTURES, ETC.

"Dynamite"	Paul Smith
"Kaos"	R. Hambour
"Aardvark"	M. O'Neil
"Trochus"	A.R. Human
"Emma"	R. Phillips
"Kriti II"	G. Meyers (not staying in pool)
"Ventura II"	A.L. Harper (not staying in pool)
Not yet named	R. Forster
"Lysander"	Les Williams
"Antares"	D. Evans to D. & J. Kapelis
"Halloween"	J. Taylor to B. Dixon
"Seabreeze"	K. Flint to D. Evans
"Cynthia II"	B. Codd & G. Ledger
