

Envenomation by box Jellyfish

R. Saravanan¹, I. Syed Sadiq¹, K. Shanmuganathan¹, A. K. Abdul Nazar¹ and K. K. Joshi²

¹Mandapam Regional Centre of ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Mandapam

²ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi

During the month of August 2016, two cases of envenomation by jellyfishes were reported from Dhanushkodi and Rameswaram. In the Dhanuskodi incident, two fishermen were stung by jellyfish tentacles attached to the gill net they were operating. Initially both these fishermen felt that the pain due to the sting would go within a few hours. However their pain started to increase with severe low back pain, excruciating muscle cramps and nausea. This kind of pain development due to jellyfish sting is characteristic of Irukandji syndrome. Enquiries with local fishermen revealed that a box jellyfish locally known as “*Nalu Moolai Sori*” was responsible. In the second incidence, a fisherman working in a trawler was stung when he handled the box jellyfish in the catch. He felt difficulty in breathing along with unbearable pain and swelling around the shoulder and throat. In both the cases the doctors at the district headquarters hospital in Ramanathapuram administered saline and pain killer but the agonizing pain started to diminish only after 24 hours and they had to be bed ridden for nearly four days.

Irukandji syndrome is a condition induced by the

envenomation by the sting of a box jellyfish *Carukia barnesi*, a native of Australian marine waters. It is derived from the Australian Irukandji tribe who were often affected by stings of this box jellyfish. Many other species of box jellyfishes also sting and cause similar symptoms. All the three victims of jellyfish sting were interviewed to ascertain the variety of jelly fish involved in the incidents by showing photographs of various species to them. From the description on the concentration of the stinging cells in bands on the tentacles and photographic verification by the victims, it was concluded that a box jellyfish from the family Carybdeidae was mainly responsible for this kind of envenomation. There is no antivenom for this kind of jellyfish sting, but vinegar poured on the sting site, is reported to reduce the firing up of further nematocysts, thereby reducing further venom being injected (Fenner and Hadok, 2002, *Med. J. Aust.* 177(7): 362). Death due to the sting of *Nalu Moolai Sori* (Box Jelly fish) has been reported from Gulf of Mannar once earlier (Lal Mohan, 1971, *Current Science*, 40 (23): 637). However there may be many unreported cases also among the fishers.