MEDIA RELEASE

A rash of mango madness in the NT discussed at surgeons conference

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A case of complex hand infections secondary to Mango Sap Burns has been raised for discussion at the Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) in Adelaide.

Dr Edward Gibson, a Darwin plastic surgery service registrar cited the recent case of mango dermatitis in the Northern Territory with the region being a major supplier of mangoes and relying heavily on fruit pickers from overseas.

Dr Gibson said that each year, a number of pickers suffer mango dermatitis, or ‘sap burn’, caused by contact with mango sap.

Mango dermatitis is typically self-limiting without significant complications.

“This year five complex hand infections, thought to be secondary to mango dermatitis, were observed at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

“Such a case series has not previously occurred in the experience of the Royal Darwin Hospital Surgical Department and, as far as we are aware, there are no other reports of such complications of mango dermatitis.

“We performed a methodology case note review and a literature search and all the affected patients provided consent.

“Over a six week period, we observed five cases of complex hand infections occurring in healthy young men, without predisposing risk factors.

“All were from Vanuatu and were in the Territory picking mangoes.

“There was no history of trauma but all patients described symptoms consistent with mango sap burns.

Damaged or affected skin was surgically removed, dressings were changed regularly and, in three cases, full thickness skin grafts were required.

“It is not entirely clear if mango dermatitis was a precipitant in these cases but it is rare for healthy patients to develop such complex hand infections spontaneously.

“Considering the serious nature of these infections and the significant morbidity that resulted, further research into a potential link between mango dermatitis and hand infections is needed,” Dr Gibson said.

Up to 1500 surgeons are meeting in the Adelaide Convention Centre this week for a series of workshops, discussions, Plenaries and masterclasses across a broad range of surgical issues.

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About RACS
RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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