

Appendix 6 TOXIC MENTAL CONFUSION

Mental confusion state is the name given to the condition where a casualty becomes confused and disoriented after being poisoned by a chemical, including alcohol and illicit substances. Even hallucinations (hearing voices and/or seeing terrifying images) can occur either as a direct result of the chemical on the brain, e.g. chlorinated hydrocarbons, or indirectly, when the function of vital organs such as heart, liver, or kidney is severely disturbed by poisons.

Diagnosis

- If the mental confusion state is due to a direct action of the chemical on the brain, the casualty will develop the signs and symptoms within 15 to 30 minutes after exposure.
- The casualty may be disorientated as to the date, time and place, and be unable to speak coherently. He may be unable to recognize friends, or perform simple tasks which he does in everyday life.
- On occasions, the casualty may appear drowsy and can only be roused with difficulty.

Look for signs of

- Suffocation (see **table 9**)
 - Shock (see **table 11**)
 - Jaundice (see **table 15**)
 - Acute kidney failure (see **table 12**)
and treat for these if appropriate.
- In severe cases, the casualty may become unconscious.
 - Some chemicals may cause confusion with mental agitation and aggressive violent behaviour.

