Poison Center Call Trends

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Recent trends indicate that U.S. poison centers are receiving more calls related to intentional exposures and fewer calls related to those that are unintentional. Intentional exposures are associated with more serious medical outcomes and require more time from poison center staff. This suggests that poison centers may need additional training and resources to address changes in callers’ needs.

Researchers sought to identify trends in exposures and resulting medical outcomes, using 2000 to 2015 data from the American Association of Poison Control Centers National Poison Data System. They found that the proportion of intentional exposures increased from 11.3 to 17.6 percent over the 16-year time period, while unintentional cases decreased from 85.9 to 78.4 percent. The percent change from unintentional to intentional exposure was most prominent for youth ages 13 to 19. Trends in medical outcomes also changed over time, with a decrease in the frequency of minor effects, and an increase in the frequency of moderate to major effects, including death.

After identifying these national trends, the researchers examined data from a single poison center to determine their impact on staff workload. The researchers found that the number of data entry notes per case, which was used as a proxy measure for staff workload, was greater for calls related to intentional exposure (9.2) than for unintentional exposure (1.6).


Links within this resource
[1] https://doi.org/10.1080/15563650.2017.1410170