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Poisoning in children: A poisoning helpline experience

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Children are exposed to a wide range of toxic products with spectrum getting broadened due to introduction of a diverse range of pesticides, household cleaners, drugs etc. from time to time. Easy availability of poisonous pesticides in a largely agrarian economy coupled with lack of awareness about the safe use, access control, early symptoms and first responder mitigation strategies add to the problem. The data from India is essentially based on hospital studies and hence the exact magnitude of the problem cannot be defined. The present study based on telephone calls made to the National Poisons Information Centre, was aimed to determine the age groups in children involved and the common products implicated in poisoning over a period of five years (March 2009-April 2014). The calls were divided into four age groups (Gp.I: 0-6yrs., Gp.II: >6-12yrs., Gp.III : >12-16yrs., Gp.IV :>16-18 yrs.). The substances implicated were categorized into eight groups of household products, agricultural pesticides, industrial chemicals, drugs, bites and stings, plants, unknown and miscellaneous classes. The mode of poisoning was predominantly accidental and the age group mainly involved was Gp.I. Males outnumbered females. The highest incidence was due to household products comprising of pesticides, disinfectants, detergents and corrosives, antiseptics etc. The incidence and trend could be variable due to lack of coordination and harmonization of reporting and the absence of a central registry of poisoning cases. However, the study does highlight the increasing use of household products. Since pediatric poisonings are largely due to negligence and ignorance, implementation of prevention programmes and identification of high risk circumstances can help in reducing morbidity and mortality in children.

Biography

Sharda Shah Peshin has a number of research publications in toxicology and poisoning including research papers, books, manuals, brochures and management cards. She has also published a number of educative leaflets, posters and handouts to raise awareness about the safe use of chemicals and prevention of poisoning. This literature is of immense help to hospitals, primary health centers and general public. She was a member of the Protocol Development Group of the National Snakebite Management Protocol India, Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India, 2008. Her area of interest is Toxicology and Poisoning.

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