School-based health promotion for poisoning prevention education in children – A National Poisons Information Service (Cardiff) proposal to reduce poisonings in the UK

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Objective
To analyse calls to UK National Poisons Information Service (NPIS) and then develop a school-based, poisoning prevention programme aimed at pupils 4 to 11 years.

Methods
The UK Poisons Information Database (UKPID) was searched for poisoning enquiries between January 2008 and December 2012 for all cases involving children aged 0 to 11 years.

Results
The NPIS received a total of 84,967 calls regarding children up to and including 11 years of age during this period. Of these, 19.5% (n = 16,542) involved enquiries concerning the specific target group (4 to 11 years-old). The number of enquiries decreases with age, the highest proportion of the target group, (4-11 years) related to the youngest children, aged 4 years (33%).

Conclusion
These data suggest that the greatest proportion of children of school age with suspected poisoning are aged 4-years-old. Poisoning prevention educational programmes, focusing on children between 4 to 11 years, but particularly the younger children, may help to reduce the number of children exposed to potentially toxic agents. Previous educational programmes have included stand alone, generalised sessions. However, it has been suggested that this method has resulted in a lack of retained knowledge.

Our proposed intervention aims to integrate poisoning awareness within the school curriculum by developing an age-specific, hands-on topical approach. Schools could use these sessions as a starting point for further projects such as focussed safety awareness weeks, whereby knowledge is more likely to be retained by pupils. The intervention programme, also anticipates that younger siblings will be inadvertently educated by their older brothers and sisters, an outcome reported with other prevention studies.

References

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