

How can we help you? Collaboration between Poisonings Information Centre and ambulance services in Estonia.

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● Objective

Every year treatment of poisonings takes approximately 1,5 million euros from Estonia's Health Insurance budget. Timely consultation with Poisonings Information call line is known to be an efficient measure to cut the costs and help the patient to get most appropriate care. There are about 600 ambulance calls to poisoning victims each year in Estonia. Most of ambulance brigade team leaders are nurses and specialist consultation should be especially valuable to them. This study examines, what kind of help does the ambulance service ask from Poisonings Information Centre and what patients worry them most.

● Method

Calls from ambulance teams in Estonian Poisonings Information Centre (EPIC) database were analysed from 01.jan. 2021 - 31 dec. 2021. Calls about accidents and suicide attempts were analysed separately by age groups and causative agents, toxscore for the patients was evaluated. Data was collected about EPIC response – need to hospitalise, treatment measures advised to be taken.

● Results

Most frequently asked question was immediate treatment measures needed (32,4%), followed by possible symptoms (24,6%), need to hospitalize (17,2%) and toxic dose (17,7%). See Fig 1.

98% of the enquiries were about internal exposures and 18% of calls were made when ambulance was still on its way to the patient. In accidental poisonings group most consulted were children aged 1 -3 (see Fig 2). In this group 46,8% of patients were advised to stay at home observation and 34% did not need any medical intervention (See Fig.3) **56 % of children had Toxscore 0.** Overall in accidental group 52% of patients were referred to hospital and 48% to stay home. **In suicidal attempt group 98% of patients were referred to hospital due to need to get psychiatric evaluation. In this group most consulted groups were children (28%) followed by young adults 20 -29 years (19%)** Most often asked about causative agents were different medications (mainly Psychotropic, 52%). See Fig 4. At the same time we noticed, that there are several calls from hospital doctors about patient with serious poisonings about whom there had been no inquiry from ambulance.

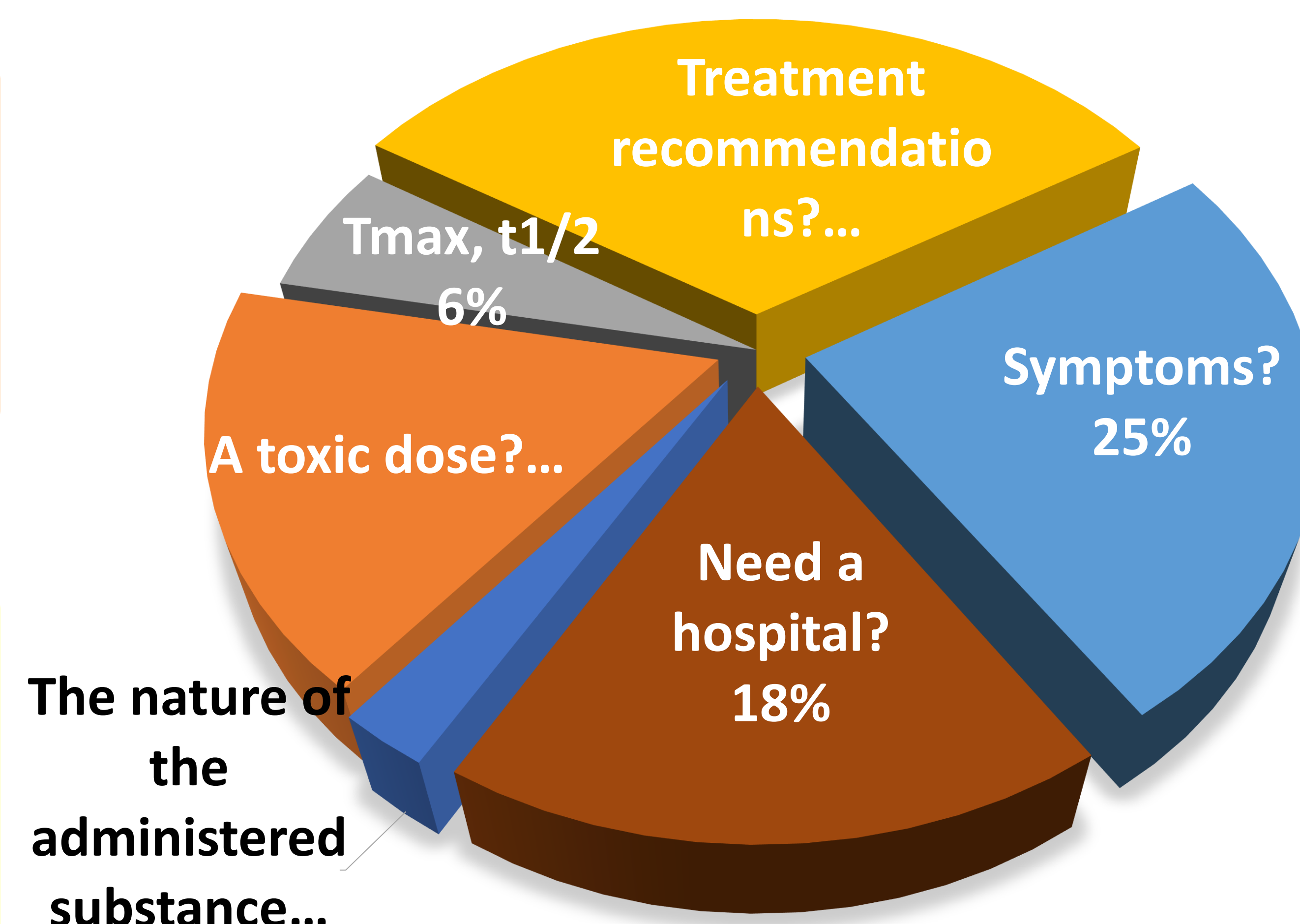


Fig 1 Questions asked most often by ambulance staff

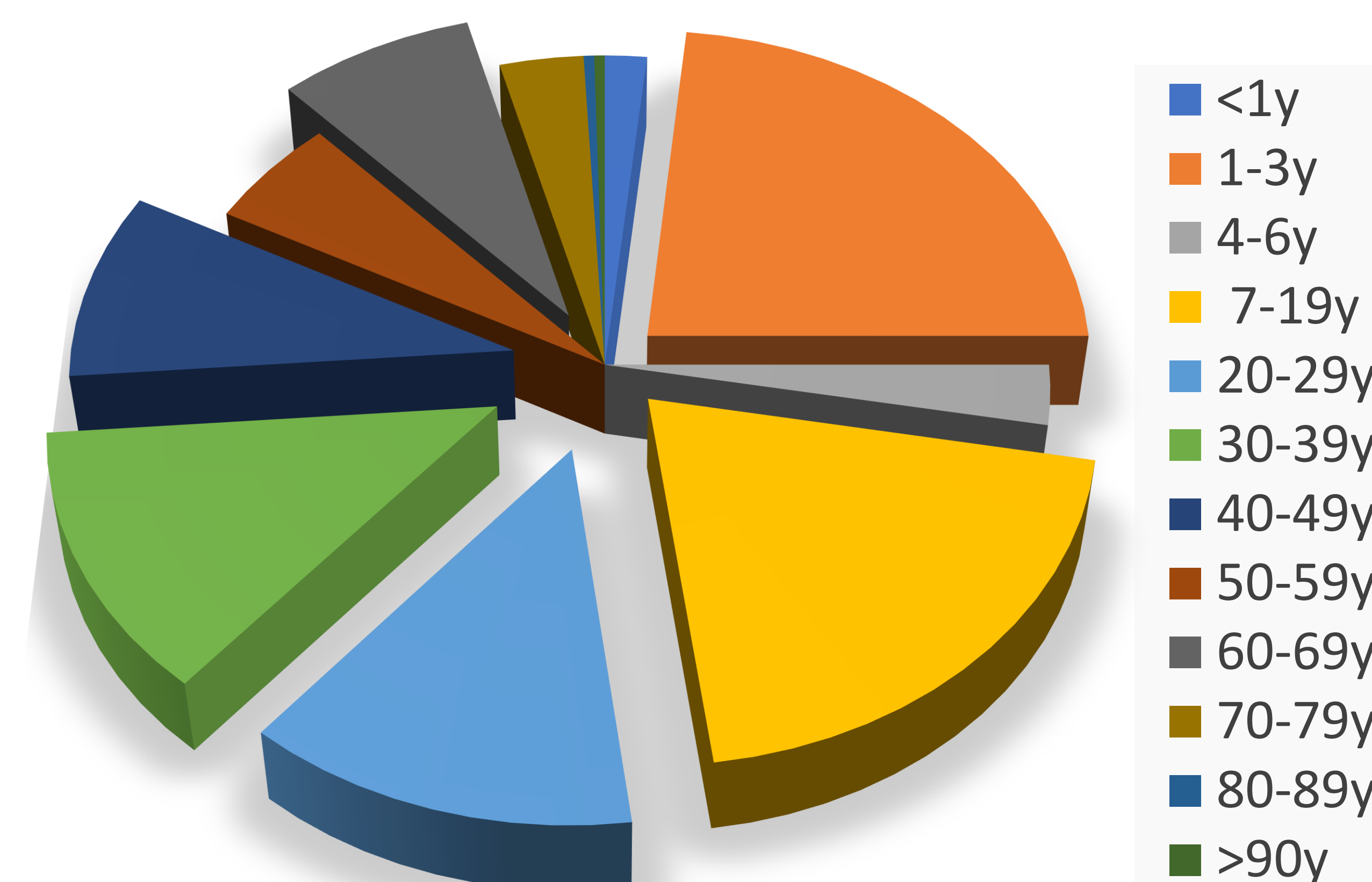


Fig 2. Consulted patients distribution by age groups

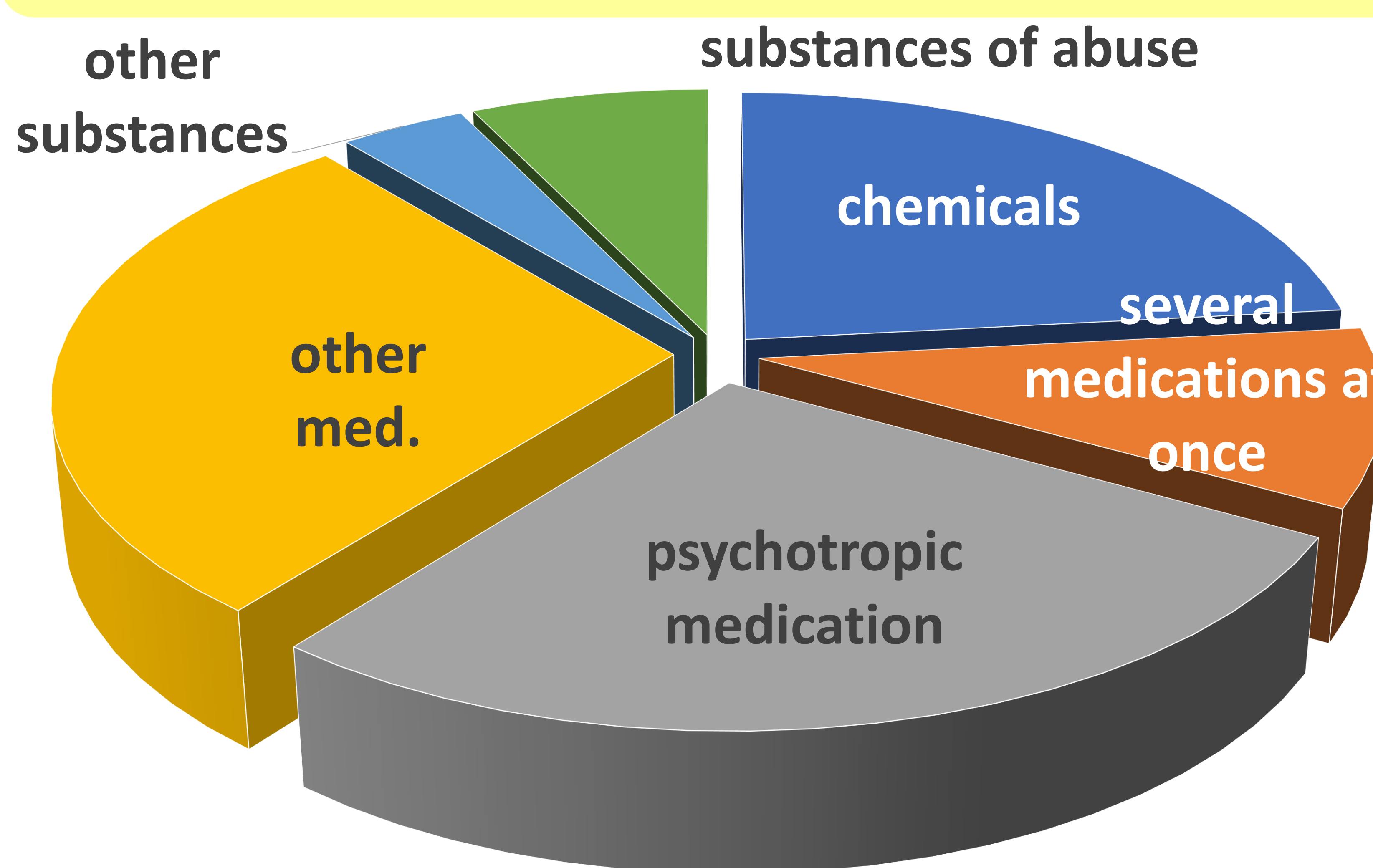


Fig 4. Ambulance consultations distribution by causative substance

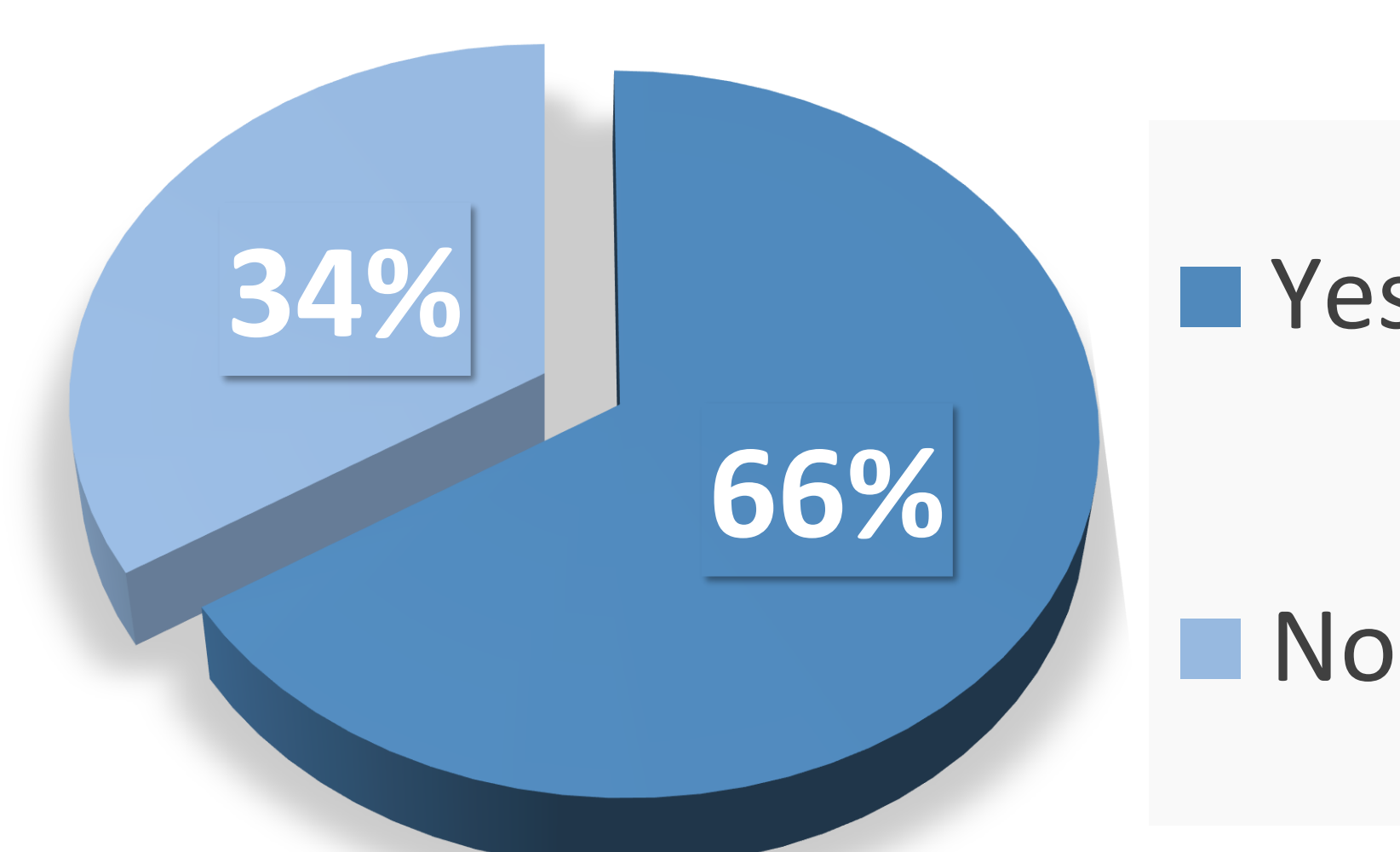


Fig 3. Intervention needed? No meaning none at all, even rinsing or offering water

● Conclusion

Ambulance service uses EPICs help mainly to decide the treatment measures, be ready for possible symptoms and decide whether to take the patient to hospital. They should be encouraged to call more often so all patients will get right treatment prehospital already. **As it occurred in poisoning accident half of the cases there was no actual need to send an ambulance.** To improve such situation EPIC plans courses for dispatch service, to encourage them to consult more with us.