

Estonian Poisoning Information Centre: slowly but surely - experience of the first 10 years



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The Poisoning Information Centre's objective is to provide adequate advice quickly so as to reduce the incidence of illness, damage to health and death as a result of severe cases of poisoning. Our centres are staffed with internationally trained and highly experienced doctors and nurses working in the fields of emergency medicine, anaesthesia and intensive care.

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Objective

The Estonian Poisoning Information Centre (EPIC) and its call centre have been working since 6 October 2008 when our emergency medicine nurses with toxicology training first started consulting enquiries from colleagues and the general population. Besides consulting poisoning calls, we are actively teaching and training hospital staff, ambulance teams, rescue departments and emergency call centre staff as well as the general population. A large part of EPIC's activities has been media work in different channels. We give an overview of the impact of the first 10 years of EPIC on the Estonian health care system and general population awareness. Number of population in Estonia is 1,3mln

Methods

All calls answered by the EPIC, published articles, lectures about poisoning and prevention were analysed via time-line from 1 October 2008 to 30 September 2018.

Results

The PIC hotline worked 24/7 from 2012-2016 and from May 2018. Due to staff shortage in period 2016 - May 2018 our info line was open 9-5 pm and 24 h only in weekends. In 10 years 16,200 calls have been consulted, more than 200 courses and at least one media event in week were provided (2008-2015 and from 2018). The number of hospitalized patient with poisoning has decreased 8% every year. The number of ambulance visits due to poisoning has also decreased every year (from 1% of all calls to 0.6%) and in approx 70% of all cases home observation was advised so reducing needless emergency room (ER) and ambulance visits. The number of calls to PIC was correlated with provided lectures (number of calls decreased 2016-2017 10.6% compared with 2015). 2016 - 2017 the number of lecture hours remained the same, but was addressed to medical professionals rather than to general population which resulted in decrease in call numbers. The knowledge of the general population about hotline (accessed by polls) has been rising 2008-2015 (20% of all population) but needs further improvement.

Conclusions

In first 10 years EPIC has found its place in the Estonian healthcare system and proved itself a trustworthy partner to doctors, nurses and ambulance staff as well as the general population. The impact of poison information consultations has seen a decrease in ambulance calls and hospital visits due to poisoning. Systematic education increases awareness of the population without an expensive media campaign, and has a positive impact on the volume of poisoning calls handled by the centre (1). Educational programs have an immediate effect on call volume through population knowledge about the PIC's telephone number, but have not had an immediate effect on the number of patients hospitalized for poisoning.

References

[1] Põh K, Oder M. The effect of active poison information education on the call volume and structure. Clin Toxicol (Phila). 2011;49:24c.

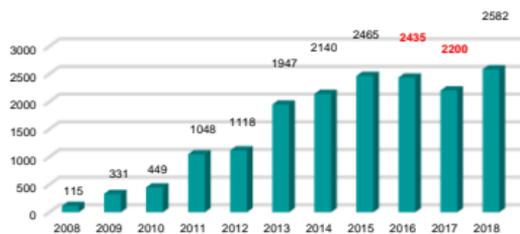


Fig 1. Number of calls via hotline 16662, 2008-2018 (source: EPIC)

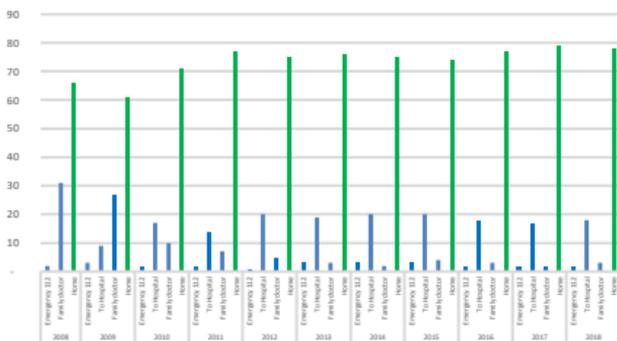


Fig 2. Recommendation for patient monitoring place (% from all calls) 2008-2018 (source: EPIC)

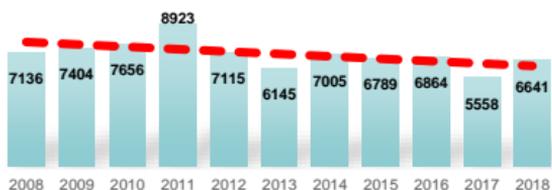


Fig 3. Number of all acute poisoned patients in all age groups, treated at hospitals 2008-2018 (data from Estonian Health Insurance Fund)