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Factors contributing to anxiety and a lack of confidence amongst specialists in poison information: Does simulation training help?

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Objective: To determine the factors contributing to anxiety and a lack of confidence amongst specialists in poison information (SPIs). To evaluate whether simulation training can help to improve specialist knowledge and alleviate anxiety.

Methods: A self-administered questionnaire was performed in September 2017. Participants were asked to rate their levels of confidence and anxiety when providing poisons information advice. Participants were SPIs who worked at Siriraj Poison Control Center, Thailand.

Results: From a total of 22 SPIs, 22 responded to the survey (100%). The mean age was 33 years (SD 4.1). The median duration of experience working as an SPI was 6.5 years (range, 1-12), while working as a pharmacist was 10 years (range, 2-21). The majority of respondents were female (77.3%), part-time (72.7%) and had no other clinical experience (63.6%). Levels were measured from 0 to 10, by Likert scale. The median level of confidence in providing toxicology advice was 6.5 (range, 1-9), while the median level of anxiety was 7.0 (range, 2-9). Respondents indicated that factors contributing to their lack of confidence and anxiety related to knowledge (90.9%), the attending toxicologists (59.1%), information searching (22.7%), and communication with callers (9.1%). Of the 22 respondents, 10 SPIs (45.5%) had participated in monthly multidisciplinary toxicology simulation training. All participants in simulation training were highly satisfied, indicating that it was very helpful and relevant to their work as SPIs. Nine of ten participants indicated that their level of confidence had increased, while 6 of 10 participants indicated that the training helped in reducing their level of anxiety.

Conclusion: Many SPIs at Siriraj Poison Control Center displayed anxiety and a lack of confidence in their work. This is thought to be due to limited exposure to clinical toxicology scenarios, and their limited training in toxicology as pharmacists. Through multi-disciplinary simulation training, all participants reported positive effects on their knowledge of toxicology, and their confidence in their work, as well as reduced the levels of anxiety in carrying out their work. Thus, simulation training tailored to SPIs could be a useful way to improve poisons centre service provision.