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A retrospective review of accidental poisoning cases among infants and toddlers reported to the Malaysian Poison Centre (2006-2016).

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Objectives: Accidental poisoning is a common occurrence amongst infants and toddlers because of their curious nature, their inability to comprehend the concept of danger, as well as not being able to read warning labels. The tendency to explore and investigate their surroundings usually results in the consumption of potentially dangerous materials or objects they are able to get a hold of. As there is no record of an extensive study in Malaysia on cases of accidental poisoning among infants and toddlers, there is a need for a retrospective analysis to be carried out. Hence the aim of this study is to evaluate the poisoning cases among infants and toddlers in Malaysia that were reported to this centre.

Methods: We retrospectively reviewed the records of all poisoning cases among children less than 4 years of age from 2006 to 2016. The data was analysed according to age group and gender of cases, circumstances and the toxic agents which caused the poisoning.

Results: During the 10-year study period, 9120 calls met our criteria were referred to the Malaysian National Poison Centre (NPC). There is an increasing trend of poisoning calls reported to the NPC from 2014 to 2016. The majority (87.3%) of poisoning cases consists of those aged between 1 to 4 years old, followed by 11.7% were 4 weeks to 12 months old and the least were those aged less than 4 weeks (1%). Unintentional poisoning accounts for 83.3% of cases whereas 13.1% of cases were intentional while the remaining 0.6% is unknown or unrecorded. Types of exposures are mostly acute cases (96.2%). Almost 95% of the poisoning cases were due to oral ingestion. The top three agents involved in the poisonings were pharmaceutical agents (39.9%), household agents (38.8%) and pesticides (14.4%).

Conclusion: Most of the poisoning cases occurred among male infants and toddlers involving pharmaceuticals, household products and pesticides that are commonly found at home. Hence it is recommended that a poison safety education for parents and caretakers be undertaken so as to increase their awareness to the dangers of common products available in a household to infants and toddlers. Poison awareness education is essential among other interventions in order to curb future poisoning incidents among young children.