

## **Profile of Drug Overdose Cases Referred To the National Poison Centre of Malaysia in 2007**

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**Introduction** : The majority of poisoning enquiries received by the National Poison Center (NPC) of Malaysia involve chemical exposures. However, a recent national report revealed that drug overdoses constituted the major cause of poisoning admissions in Malaysia. In this regard, the NPC has decided to review the pattern of drug overdoses referred to the centre. **Objective** : This study aimed to describe the profile of drug overdose cases referred to the NPC in the year 2007. **Method** : The present study utilized data recorded using a new version of the Poisoning Case Report (PCR) form which was introduced in early 2007 with modifications made to capture a wider range of classification of the pharmaceutical products based on the IPCS INTOX Data Management System. Enquiries on general drug information and cases involving drugs of abuse were excluded. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 15.0. **Results** : During the study period, there were a total of 1900 poisoning cases reported to the centre. Almost one third of enquiries (32.2%) involved drug overdoses. Adults constituted the majority of cases (51.7%). Among all the classes of drugs, 22.7% were psychiatric drugs followed by topical agents (16.4%) and analgesics (12.6%). The majority of psychiatric drug poisoning involved adults of 20 years old and above (64%) while the rest (36%) involved those aged from 4 weeks to 19 years old. 66.9% of the total psychiatric drug poisoning were intentional and mainly due to suicidal attempts and unknown reasons. Among children aged between 4 weeks to 14 years old, the highest incidence of drug poisonings occurred in the age group 1 to 4 years old. Among children of this age group, the mode of exposure was frequently accidental involving mainly psychiatric drugs and topical agents. **Conclusion** : These findings may not be representative of the drug overdose cases in Malaysia because these cases were the ones referred to the centre for consultation. In addition, it is also assumed that medical professionals mostly called the centre for other chemical poisoning, especially pesticides, since most of them may have better knowledge of drug overdoses. However, this study provides information on the general trend among those cases and will be useful for planning future educational and preventive measures.