

Intentional overdoses and self-harm enquiries in adolescents aged 8-16.

A retrospective review of enquiries to the UK National Poisons Information Service

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Objective

The challenges faced by adolescents are becoming more complex as the pressures and demands on our society increases. Sources including the media and social network sites, in addition to pressures within family and school life, may all contribute to these. Appropriate support networks are not accessible to every individual and this can contribute to individuals choosing impulsive, consequential acts including self-harm by poisoning. We wished to review the pattern of poisons enquiries concerning this group of patients.

Method

Enquiries to the National Poisons Information Service (NPIS) between the 1st September 2008 and the 31st August 2014 relating to intentional overdoses and self-harm in children aged 8-16 were reviewed retrospectively and evaluated to assess trends and patterns of exposure.

Results

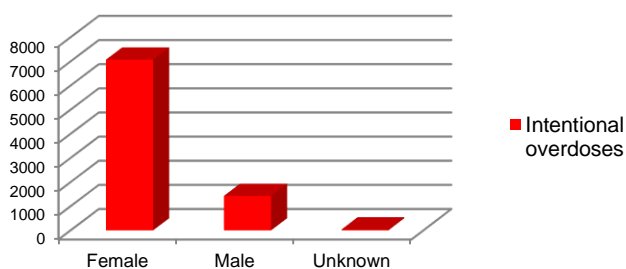
The NPIS received 8,542 enquiries relating to intentional overdoses or self harm attempts in children aged 8 to 16-years-old: 40% of total enquiries for this age group (n=21,425). Eighty three percent (n=7073) of these enquiries concerned girls and 17% boys (n=1428), with 0.5% (n=41) of unknown gender (figure 1). This contrasts with only 61% (n=13070) girls, 38% (n=8245) boys and 0.5% (n=110) unknown gender for other enquiries in this age group. Calls relating to children aged 13 to 16-years-old accounted for ninety-five percent (n = 8132) of the intentional exposures in children aged 8-16, with only five percent (n=410) involving children aged 8 to 12-years-old. The number of enquiries each year were 1882, 1493, 1352, 1149, 1280 and 1386 respectively from 2008 to 2014.

The commonest ingestions were paracetamol (n=3447), ibuprofen (n=917), co-codamol (n=405), ferrous sulphate/fumarate (n=324), fluoxetine (n=307), aspirin (n=286) and mefenamic acid (n=186) and citalopram (148) (figure 2). Thirty-nine percent (n=3297) displayed features of toxicity at the time of the enquiry. Thirty percent (n=2592) had a minor features with a poisons severity score (PSS) of one, six percent (n=518) moderate features (PSS2) and two percent severe features (PSS2).

Discussion

The most common agents ingested intentionally by adolescents include those readily available over the counter. Intentional overdoses and self harm attempts in teenage females in particular is a cause of concern.

Gender



Ingested agents

