



# Poison HOTLINE

Partnership between Iowa Health System and  
University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics

April 2013



## THANK YOU...

to our 98 hospital partners who have joined the effort to sustain Iowa's poison control center. We appreciate your emergency department and hospital administration's support of the subscription plan that allows your hospital to make **unlimited** calls to the ISPCC throughout the year. We hope that we continue to be an important resource to your staff. Our team is dedicated to providing high quality, cost-efficient care for poisoned patients including 24-hr access to board-certified medical toxicologists. Your support will help us continue to advance our mission to improve patient outcomes and reduce overall health care costs to our communities. Again, thank you for being a valuable partner.

## The ISPCC's Team of Nurse Specialists

The ISPCC is staffed 24/7 by Specialists in Poison Information (SPI), with back up by board-certified physician toxicologists. All SPIs are registered nurses, most of whom have at least 10 years of ER or ICU experience. A newly hired SPI undergoes an intensive three to four month training program. During their training, the SPIs learn the symptoms, assessment and management of:

- Pharmaceutical poisonings
- Drug-drug interactions
- Plant and mushroom ingestions
- Snake bites
- Adverse effects from drugs of abuse
- Heavy metal poisoning
- Exposures to pesticides, household chemicals and hazardous materials

After a specialist has managed 2000 exposure patients and has completed 2000 hours of taking poisoning calls, the SPI is required to sit for the national certification exam. Upon passing the exam, the nurse becomes a Certified Specialist in Poison Information (CSPI). Specialists maintain certification by passing the national recertification examination every seven years.

Poison specialists provide assistance by telephone to the general public, hospitals, doctors' offices, EMS, nursing homes, health departments, schools, restaurants, farmers, veterinarians, industrial plants, governmental offices, HazMat teams, law enforcement, correctional facilities and drug rehab facilities.

Over 25% of the ISPCC's cases are either already at a health care facility or are referred to a health care facility by the SPI. For these patients, the SPI gives the health care providers comprehensive, state-of-the-art recommendations regarding the anticipated clinical course, diagnostic testing, interpretation of laboratory results and treatment. Specialists will also make follow up calls to the health care facilities to monitor the progress of the patient, review diagnostic test results, and provide further treatment recommendations.

Ninety percent of calls from the general public are managed entirely at home by the poison specialists, saving the state of Iowa and its residents over \$12.5 million annually. For those patients in whom clinical effects may develop, the specialist will provide a home follow-up call to check on the patient's condition.

*Carol Searls, MS, RN, CSPI  
Certified Specialist in Poison Information*

**POISON**  
**Help**  
**1-800-222-1222**

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