

Annual Report 2020



Healthcare Professional Line: 01 837 9964 / 809 2566 (24hr)

Public Poisons Line: 01 809 2166 (8am-10pm)

E-mail: npicdublin@beaumont.ie **Website:** www.poisons.ie



@NPICireland



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@IrelandNpic

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| A Snapshot of the NPIC Activity in 2020 | 4 |
| NPIC Enquiries | 4 |
| Source of enquiries to the NPIC | 4 |
| Poisoning circumstances | 4 |
| Poisoning demographics | 5 |
| Incident location | 5 |
| Foreword | 5 |
| The NPIC Team | 8 |
| The Role of the NPIC | 9 |
| Quality and Training | 9 |
| Key Statistics for 2020..... | 10 |
| Time and date of enquiry | 10 |
| Figure 1: Time of enquiry to NPIC | 10 |
| Figure 2: Monthly enquiries to NPIC | 10 |
| Type of Caller | 11 |
| Table 1: Type of caller..... | 11 |
| Enquiries from Healthcare Professionals..... | 11 |
| Table 2: Enquiries from GP out-of-hours services..... | 11 |
| Enquiries from Members of the Public..... | 12 |
| Figure 3: Enquiries from members of the public (2011-2020) | 12 |
| Geographic location of poisoning cases..... | 13 |
| Incident location | 13 |
| Demographics..... | 13 |
| Figure 4: Patient demographics | 13 |
| Poisoning Circumstances | 14 |
| Agents (including unclassified agents) involved in Human Poisoning | 14 |
| Household products | 16 |
| Figure 10: The top enquiries relating to poisoning with household products in 2020 | 16 |
| Agricultural products | 16 |
| Drugs of abuse | 17 |
| Figure 12: Drugs of abuse 2020 | 17 |
| Poisoning in Children | 18 |
| Figure 13: The types of agents involved in paediatric poisoning in 2020 | 18 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Signs and symptoms at the time of enquiry to NPIC | 19 |
| Clinical outcome of serious/unusual poisoning cases..... | 19 |
| Surveillance and research during Covid-19..... | 20 |
| Toxbase® Enquiries | 21 |
| NPIC Website..... | 21 |
| NPIC on Social Media | 22 |
| Poison Prevention Materials..... | 22 |
| Regulatory activities | 23 |
| Working in partnership with the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) | 23 |
| Regulatory Meetings | 23 |
| Academic Activities | 24 |
| Lectures and Presentations..... | 24 |
| Peer Reviewers for Medical Journals | 24 |
| Education and Training | 24 |
| Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Webinars..... | 24 |
| European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists Congress 2020 | 25 |
| Committee membership | 26 |
| NPIC Staff Meetings and Journal Club..... | 26 |
| Public Relations and Media Opportunities..... | 27 |
| Staff wellbeing initiatives | 27 |
| Nutrivigilance Pilot Study in collaboration with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland | 28 |
| Contact details for the NPIC..... | 29 |

A Snapshot of the NPIC Activity in 2020

NPIC Enquiries



In 2020, NPIC received a total of 11,687 enquiries representing a 1.25% decrease on enquiries received in 2019.

- 97.4% enquiries related to human poisoning
- 1.8% enquiries were for non-emergency information
- 0.85% enquiries concerned poisoning in animals
- The busiest month was March
- The busiest times of the day were from 4pm to 9pm

Source of enquiries to the NPIC

- 44.48% of enquiries were from healthcare professionals working in primary care, hospitals, community pharmacies and veterinary practices
- 54.12% of enquiries were from members of the public
- 1.4% of enquiries came from other sources



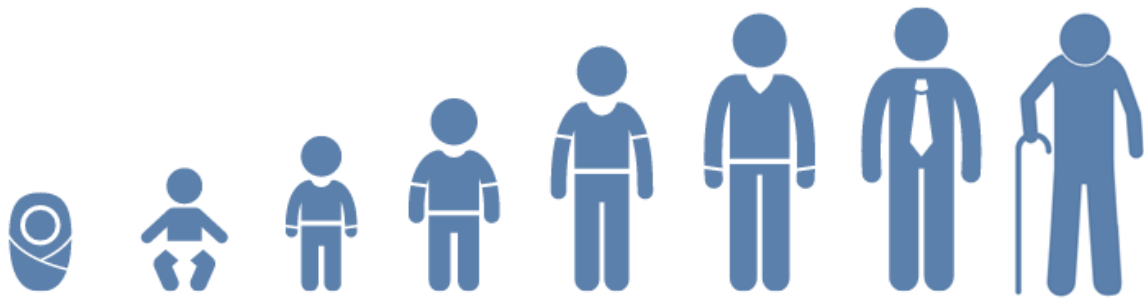
Poisoning circumstances



- 67.6% enquiries related to accidental poisonings
- 15.7% enquiries were due to medication errors
- 10.9% enquiries were for intentional poisonings
- 1% enquiries related to recreational drug abuse
- 0.5% enquiries concerned adverse reactions
- 2.5% enquiries related to other circumstances
- Circumstances were unknown for 1.8% enquiries

Poisoning demographics

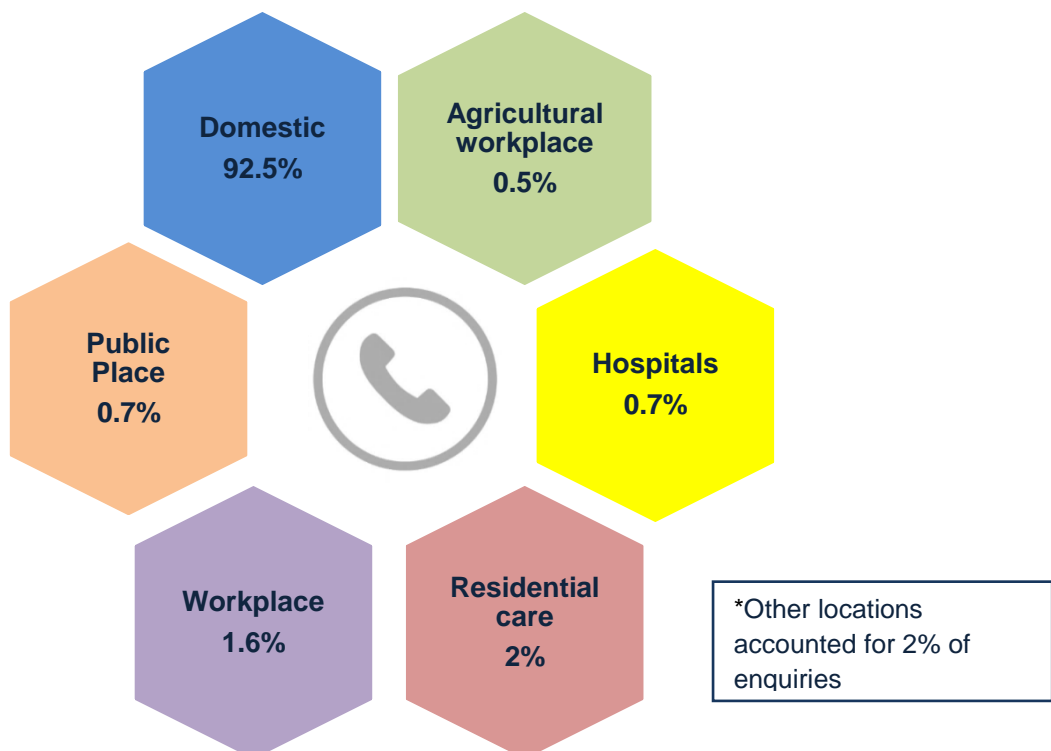
The majority of enquiries involved children and adolescents (66.8%). The peak age group for poisoning enquiries was 1-4 years (45.3%). The age was not defined in 7.9% of enquiries.



| <1 yr | 1-4yr | 5-9yr | 10-14yr | 15-19yr | 20-49yr | 50-69yr | >70yr |
|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 6.9% | 45.3% | 6.6% | 3.4% | 4.7% | 14.3% | 6.3% | 4.6% * |

*7.9% age was not recorded

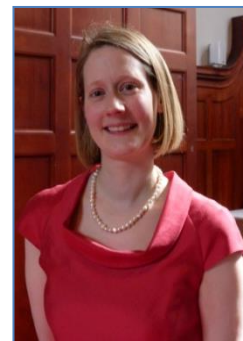
Incident location



Foreword

It is a pleasure to share the 2020 Annual Report for the National Poisons Information Centre (NPIC) in Ireland.

The NPIC operates 365 days a year and provides a 24-hour service to healthcare professionals. The NPIC staff answers queries from 8am to 10pm every day and the UK National Poisons Information Service (NPIS) is contracted to answer our calls from 10pm to 8am every night. The NPIC also operates a Public Poisons Line and provides poison information to members of the public from 8am to 10pm, seven days per week.



The Annual Report is based on data collected on enquiries to the NPIC from members of the public, healthcare professionals and others. Overall, there were 11,687 enquiries to the NPIC in 2020, a decrease of 1.25% compared to 2019. It is 10 years since the NPIC first introduced the Public Poisons Line with limited opening hours (9am-5pm, Monday-Friday) in 2011. The following year, the hours of the Public Poison Line were further extended and the service operated from 8am to 10pm daily. The proportion of enquires from members of the public has steadily increased from 22% in 2011 to over 54% in 2020.

The major event of 2020 was the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The NPIC continued to operate throughout the year and there was no interruption to service. The NPIC's role was essential and valuable during a turbulent year and we continued to provide poisons information and advice, and aimed to prevent unnecessary hospital and General Practitioner visits where possible.

A blended working approach was adopted and staff either worked in the office to answer telephone enquiries or worked remotely. All public health guidelines were followed to ensure staff safety. The staff quickly embraced the virtual world and weekly online meetings were held to keep in touch. Conferences, educational webinars and NPIS/NPIC Continuous Professional Development events moved online and this enabled staff to participate in many more events compared to traditional face-to-face meetings, where travel would have been necessary. Staff also participated in remote wellness activities to keep spirits up and ensure that there were opportunities for social interactions and exercise to support wellbeing. Some of the activities included participation in National Workplace Wellbeing Day and National Walking Day.

We had some staff changes in 2020. Elaine Donohoe, Specialist in Poisons Information, left the NPIC at the end of April 2020 after 25 years of service. We wish her well in her appointment as a Specialist in Poisons Information in the NPIS in the UK. Conor Hurley was appointed as a Specialist in Poisons Information and joined the NPIC in November 2020. We would like to welcome him to the team.

Enquiries in relation to hand sanitisers (alcohol hand gels) and cleaning products increased substantially in 2020, coinciding with increased hygiene requirements during the Covid19 pandemic. The majority of enquiries for hand sanitisers related to accidental paediatric exposures to products with high ethanol concentrations. Some

hand sanitisers were withdrawn from the market during the year due to the presence of methanol, and this generated additional calls to the NPIC from concerned individuals.

In 2020, the NPIC collaborated with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and conducted a nutrивigilance pilot study to assess the practicalities of setting up a nutrивigilance service in Ireland. A prospective study commenced at the end of 2020 and lasted for 3-months. Eligible cases that developed adverse effects following accidental poisoning with food supplements were followed-up to determine the health outcome. An expert group performed a causality score assessment to establish the likelihood that an adverse effect was due to an overdose with over-the-counter multivitamins. The study identified the resources necessary to set up a nutrивigilance service.

Finally, I would like to thank the NPIC team for going that extra mile in what has been a very challenging year. Despite staff shortages due to the covid-19 pandemic, the NPIC continued to operate providing advice to both health care professionals and members of the public with no reduction in service.

Thank you to everyone who uses our service and supports the work of the NPIC.

Dr Edel Duggan

Clinical Director

National Poisons Information Centre

The NPIC Team

The NPIC staff comprises a Clinical Director, six Specialists in Poisons Information (SPI's) and a Clerical Officer. The NPIC's phone lines are answered by the SPIs who are scientists with additional training and postgraduate qualifications in medical toxicology.



Further advice and medical information is available from the NPIC Clinical Director for the management of severe and difficult poisoning cases as required.

Clinical Director

Dr Edel Duggan MB, BCh, BAO, MD, FFARCSI, Dip Med Tox

Manager

Ms Patricia Casey BSc, Dip Med Tox

Specialists in Poisons Information

Ms Nicola Cassidy BSc, M Med Sc, Dip Med Tox

Ms Elaine Donohoe MSc, Dip Med Tox

Ms Niamh English MSc, Dip Med Tox

Mr John Herbert BSc, Dip Med Tox

Mr Feargal O'Connor BSc, Cert Med Tox

Mr Conor Hurley BSc, MSc

Clerical Officer

Ms Sinead Doyle

The Role of the NPIC

The National Poisons Information Centre (NPIC) was established in 1966 to provide telephone advice to healthcare professionals treating poisoned patients. Today the NPIC operates 365 days a year and provides a specialist telephone information service to assist healthcare professionals in the treatment of acute poisoning.

The NPIC Healthcare Professional Line is available 24-hours for medical staff and other healthcare professionals.

The telephone numbers are;

- 01 809 2566 / 01 809 2568
- 01 837 9964 / 01 837 9966

The Public Poisons Information Line was launched in 2011 and provides a dedicated number for members of the public to contact the NPIC between 8am and 10pm every day. The telephone number for the Public Poisons Information Line is 01 809 2166 and NPIC staff provide advice to members of the public on whether they need to seek medical attention following an accidental poisoning incident or if they can be safely monitored at home. It is our policy to refer all cases of intentional poisoning for medical assessment.

NPIC staff members answer enquiries between 8am and 10pm every day. The UK National Poisons Information Service is contracted to answer enquiries to the NPIC outside of these core hours. Telephone calls are automatically diverted to the UK Poisons Service between 10pm and 8am every day and the extra call charges are paid by Beaumont Hospital.

The secondary role of the NPIC is to collect and interpret epidemiological data on acute poisoning. This information is used to monitor poisoning trends and establish and update appropriate treatment protocols as required.

Quality and Training

All enquiry records are peer-reviewed and stored as hardcopy and electronically on a Poisons Information Database named UKPID. All incoming and outgoing telephone enquiries to the NPIC are audio recorded for clinical governance and to assist with staff training. The Clinical Director conducts periodic audits to ensure the quality of the service and advice provided.

The NPIC maintains close links with the UK National Poisons Information Service and regularly contributes to and organises Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities with our colleagues. NPIC staff members regularly submit research studies to the annual congress of the European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists (EAPCCT).

Key Statistics for 2020

Time and date of enquiry

The National Poisons Information Centre received a total of 11,687 enquiries in 2020. 10,630 enquires were answered between 8am and 10pm while 1,057 enquiries (9%) were received between 10pm and 8am and were answered by the UK Poisons Information Service. The busiest hours of the day were from 4pm to 9pm (Figure 1). March was the busiest month. The average number of enquires per month was 974 (Figure 2).

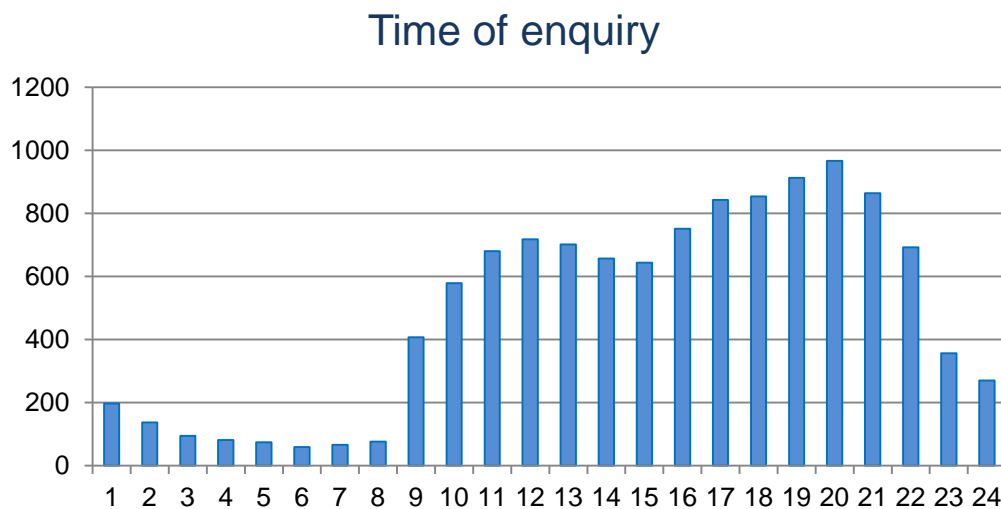


Figure 1: Time of enquiry to NPIC

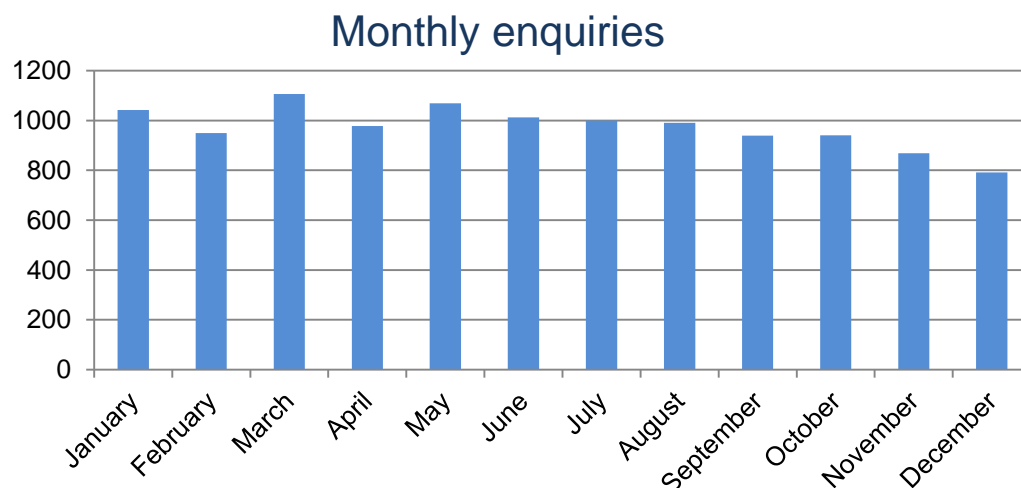


Figure 2: Monthly enquiries to NPIC

Type of Caller

The NPIC is contacted by different types of healthcare professionals, as well as members of the public and support services. The Public Poisons Line, a dedicated phone line for members of the public, was introduced in 2011 and since then the number of enquiries received from members of the public has increased annually.

In 2020, enquiries from members of the public accounted for the majority of enquiries (54.12%) to the centre.

| Enquirer | N | % |
|----------------------|-------|--------|
| Member of public | 6,325 | 54.12% |
| GP/Primary care | 2,749 | 23.52% |
| Hospital | 2,004 | 17.15% |
| Community pharmacist | 194 | 1.66% |
| Nursing home | 154 | 1.32% |
| Ambulance service | 97 | 0.83% |
| School/childcare | 28 | 0.24% |
| Support services | 22 | 0.19% |
| Veterinary practice | 35 | 0.30% |
| Other | 79 | 0.67% |

Table 1: Type of caller

Enquiries from Healthcare Professionals

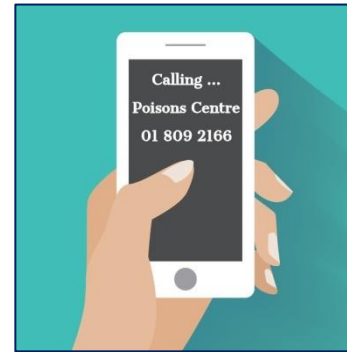
Approximately 41% of enquiries were received from healthcare professionals working in hospitals or general practice. GP out-of-hours services that operate between 6pm-8am (weekdays) and 24hr (weekends) accounted for 1,850 enquiries.

| | | | | | |
|----------|-----|------------|-----|---------|----|
| CareDoc | 719 | DDoc | 115 | KDoc | 36 |
| SouthDoc | 296 | ShannonDoc | 175 | DubDoc | 1 |
| WestDoc | 140 | NowDoc | 121 | DLDoc | 2 |
| MidDoc | 135 | NEDoc | 109 | EastDoc | 1 |

Table 2: Enquiries from GP out-of-hours services

Enquiries from Members of the Public

The NPIC was established in 1966 to provide a telephone service for healthcare professionals treating poisoned patients. If members of the public contacted the service, appropriate and tailored triage advice was provided.



To meet an increasing demand for a public poisons service, a dedicated Public Poisons Line was first introduced in 2011 as a pilot scheme. The line operated from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. In 2011, 2,095 enquiries were received from members of the public, representing 22% of total enquiries. In 2012, the operating hours of the Public Poisons Line were extended and operated from 8am to 10pm daily. The NPIC has no dedicated funding to advertise the Public Poisons Line to members of the public and relies on word of mouth, referrals from healthcare professionals, search engine results and the NPIC social media accounts to help raise awareness of the service.

The number of enquiries from members of the public has increased with each year (Figure 3). In 2019, enquiries from members of the public accounted for 50.7% and this was the first time that enquiries from healthcare professional enquiries were exceeded. In 2020, 6,325 enquiries were received from members of the public.

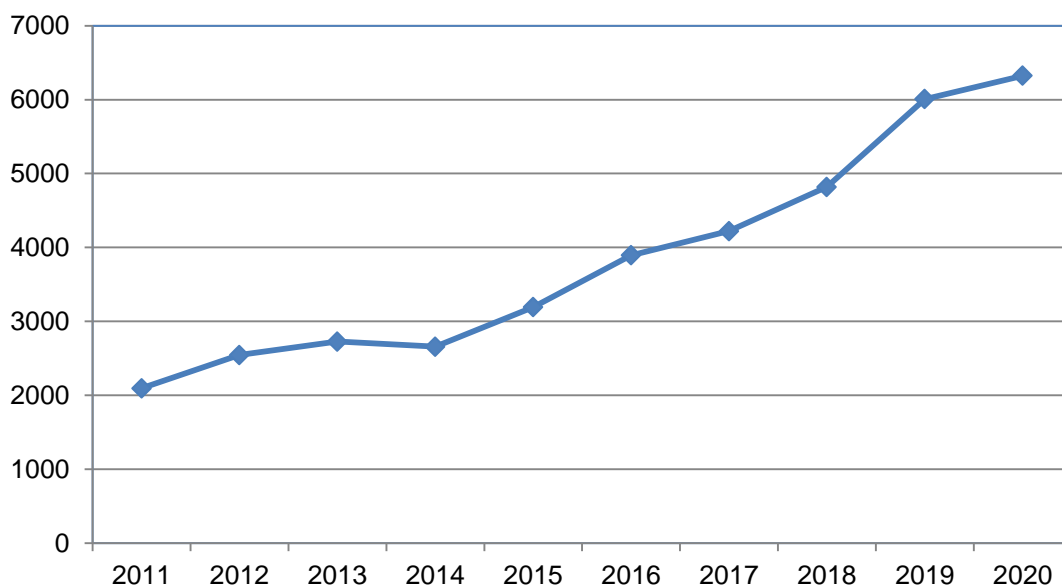


Figure 3: Enquiries from members of the public (2011-2020)

Geographic location of poisoning cases

- 57.4% of cases were based in Leinster (n=6,539)
- 26.5% of cases were in Munster (n=3,017)
- 8.54% of cases were in Connacht (n=972)
- 5% of cases were in Ulster (n=565)
- 0.2% of cases were overseas
- 2.36% of cases were from an unknown location

Incident location

Most human poisonings occurred in the home or domestic setting (92.5%). A smaller number of poisonings occurred in nursing home/care home/residential facilities (n=222), an occupational setting (n=183), public places (n=82), hospitals (n=77), schools/crèches (n=73), agricultural workplaces (n=55), and other locations (n=135).

Demographics

The majority of poisoning enquiries related to children aged 14 years and younger (n=7,085) and the peak age was 1-4 years old. 3,393 poisoning enquiries involved individuals aged over 15 years. The age was not recorded for 905 enquiries.

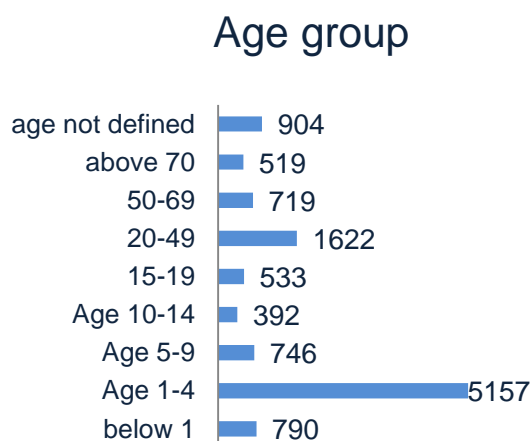


Figure 4: Patient demographics

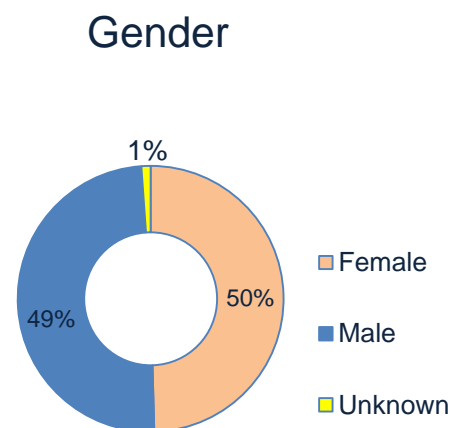


Figure 5: Gender distribution

Poisoning Circumstances

The NPIC received 11,383 enquiries related to poisoning in humans. The majority of enquiries involved accidental/unintentional poisonings (n=7,798). 1,831 enquiries related to therapeutic errors with medications, 1,267 enquiries were intentional overdoses and 116 enquiries related to recreational abuse. The remaining cases were adverse reactions or cases of unknown circumstances or intent.

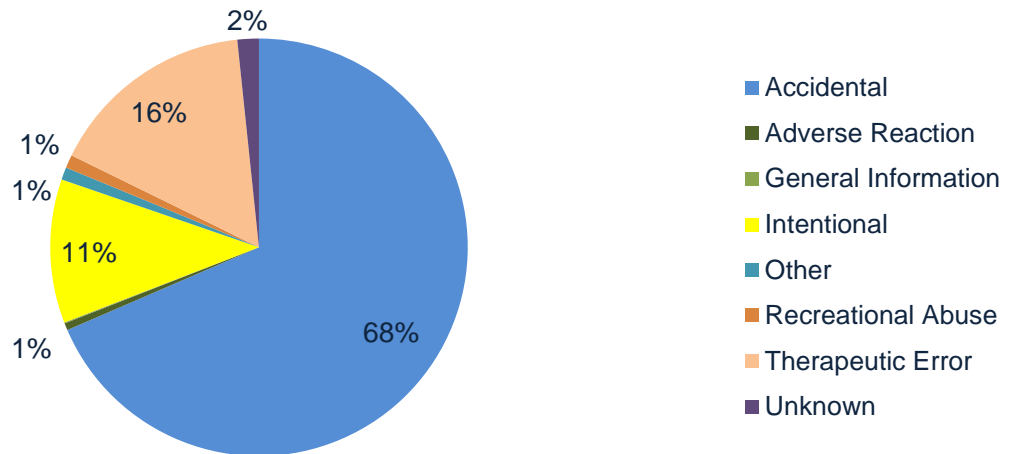


Figure 6: Poisoning circumstances

Agents (including unclassified agents) involved in Human Poisoning

Over 18,997 agents were involved in cases of human poisoning. 49.1% of all agents were drugs (including medications and drugs of abuse), 19.7% were household products such as fabric detergent products and multi-purpose cleaners, and 16.6% were industrial agents including alcohols, corrosive substances, essential oils and hydrocarbons.

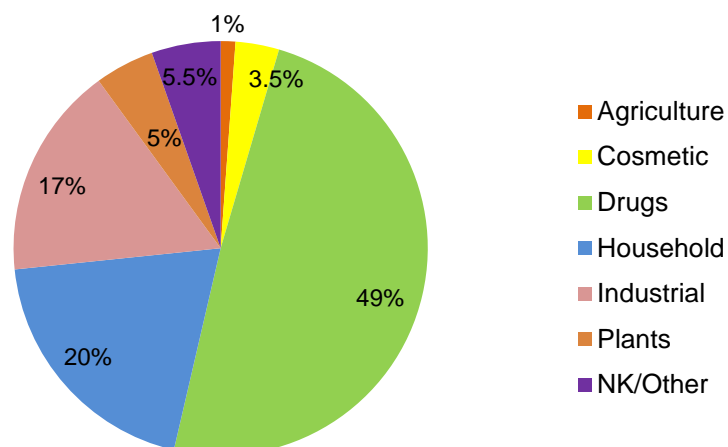


Figure 7: Agents involved in poisoning cases

Top 10 Agents

| Agent | Category |
|--|------------|
| Paracetamol | Medication |
| Ethanol (alcohol) | Industrial |
| Ibuprofen | Medication |
| Disinfectant, antiseptic, hand sanitiser, sanitising agent | Household |
| Surfactant/Detergent | Household |
| Multivitamins | Medication |
| Fabric Cleaning Liquid | Household |
| Sachet/capsules | Household |
| Bleach with sodium hypochlorite | Household |
| Quetiapine | Medication |
| Washing up Liquid | Household |



In 2020 paracetamol, ibuprofen and ethanol were the top three agents implicated in poisoning enquiries, similar to the previous 2 years. The top 10 agents involved in poisoning cases are listed in Figure 8. Although codeine and caffeine appear in the top agents, they are not included in the table as they are present as ingredients in a number of analgesic products and the doses involved are usually small.

Figure 8: The top 10 agents involved in poisoning

Top 10 Medications

9,323 poisoning enquiries involved over 560 different medications. The top 10 medications are listed in Figure 9. Paracetamol was the most common medication consumed and hypnotics, multivitamins/multivitamins with mineral supplements were also commonly taken. Codeine and caffeine appear in the top medications because these ingredients are present in a number of analgesic products however; the doses involved are usually small. These ingredients are excluded from the table.

Top 10 Medications in Poisoning

- Paracetamol
- Ibuprofen
- Multivitamin preparations
- Quetiapine
- Sertraline
- Diazepam
- Aspirin
- Pregabalin
- Zopiclone
- Escitalopram



Figure 9: The top 10 medications involved in poisoning

Household products

3,749 enquiries to the NPIC in 2020 involved household products. The most common products were fabric cleaning liquid detergent capsules, bleach, disinfectants/antiseptics/sanitiser and dishwasher tablets. See page 21 for more information on enquiries relating to disinfectants and hand sanitiser.

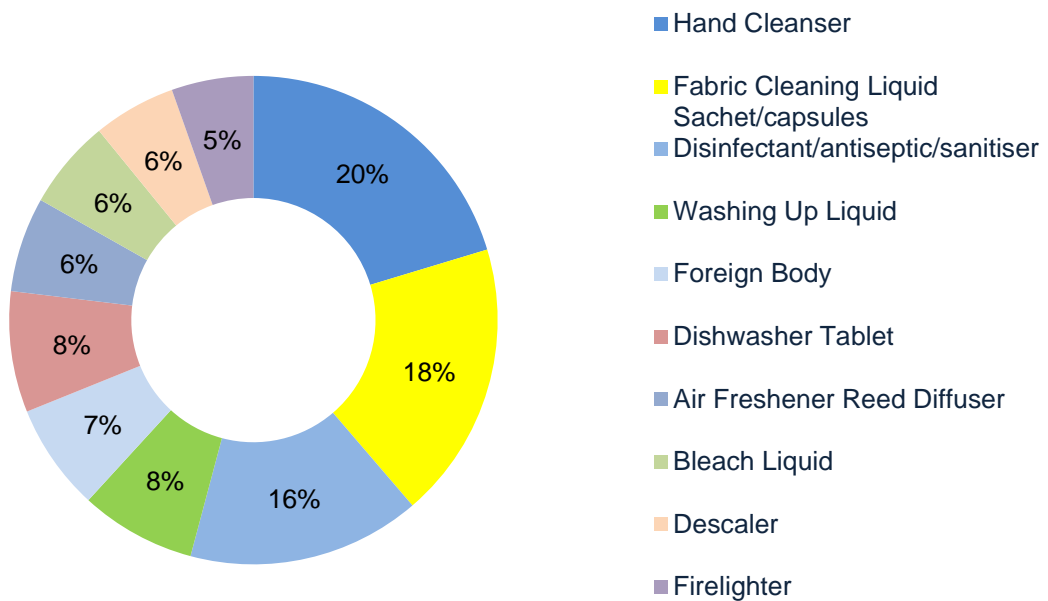
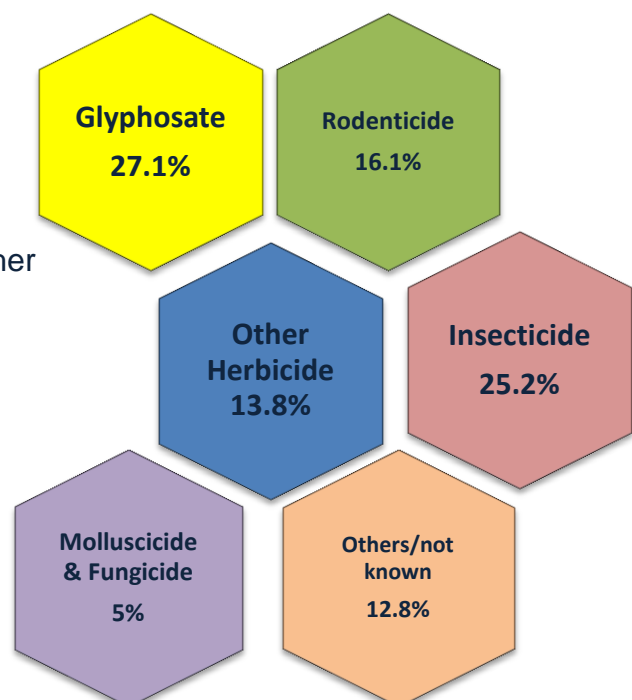


Figure 10: The top enquiries relating to poisoning with household products in 2020

Agricultural products

Agricultural agents accounted for 218 (1.2%) of poisoning enquiries and queries about exposure to glyphosate-containing weed killers predominated. Other categories of agricultural products were involved in low numbers of cases.

Figure 11: Agricultural agents



Drugs of abuse

There were 191 enquiries relating to 12 categories of poisoning with drugs of abuse. The main drugs of abuse included cocaine, heroin, cannabinoids and amphetamines. In many cases, more than one drug of abuse was involved.

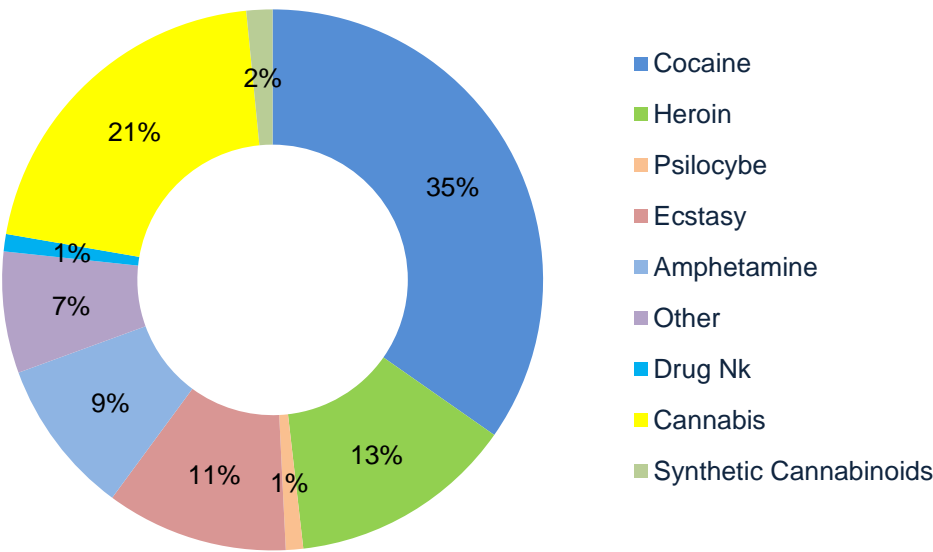


Figure 12: Drugs of abuse 2020

Poisoning in Children

In 2020, 7,085 enquiries involved children aged 14 years or under. The majority of enquiries related to children under 4 years of age (5,947, 52.2%). 82.6% of children were asymptomatic when the NPIC was contacted. 16.1% had minor or moderate symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, drowsiness or a mild local skin reaction. 1.2% of enquiries were unknown or not applicable. 10 patients had severe symptoms and there were no fatalities.



Medications were the most common type of agent involved in paediatric cases. The top enquiries concerned paracetamol, Ibuprofen and multivitamin products, as in previous years.

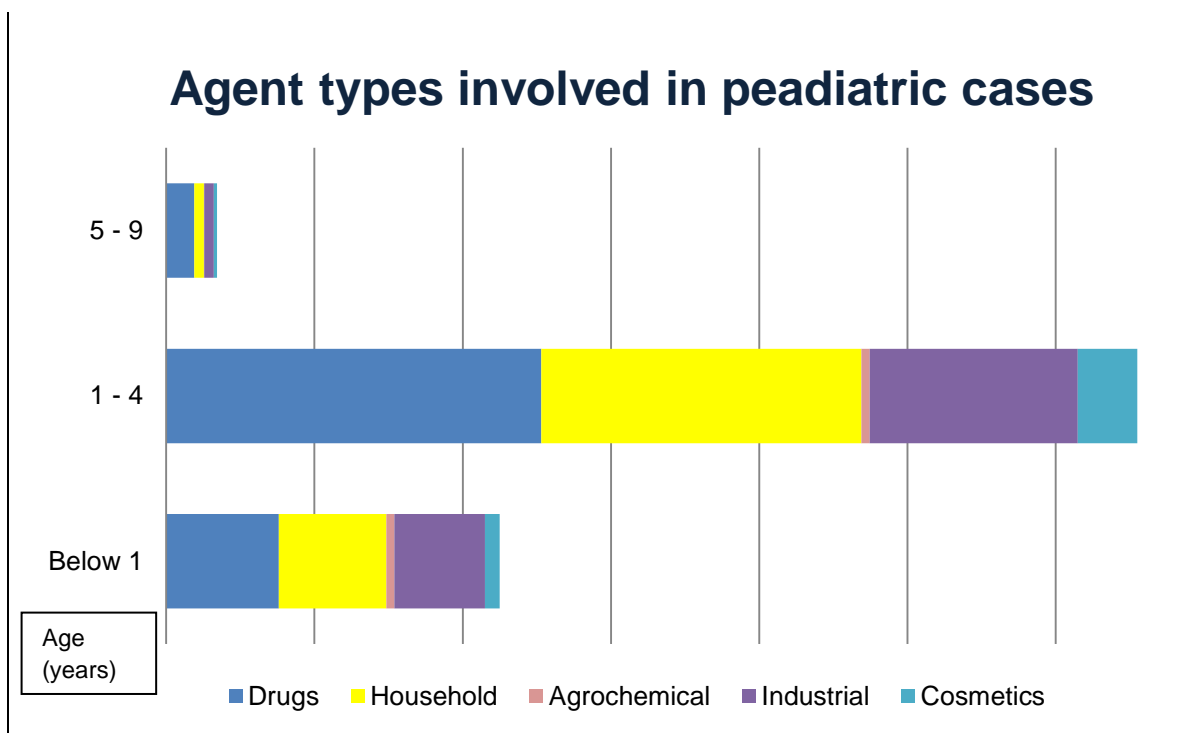


Figure 13: The types of agents involved in paediatric poisoning in 2020

Signs and symptoms at the time of enquiry to NPIC

A **Poison Severity Score** (minor / moderate / severe / none / not applicable / unknown) is assigned to each human case based on the clinical features at the time the NPIC was called (n=11,383). It is possible that some patients could have become symptomatic or their condition deteriorated after the initial contact with the NPIC.

- 70.1% (n=7,975) of patients were asymptomatic when the NPIC was contacted.
- 23.5% (n=2,676) of patients had minor signs and symptoms, for example mild gastrointestinal upset, drowsiness and mild local irritation of skin, eyes or mucous membranes.
- 3.1% (n=357) of patients had moderate signs and symptoms including repeated vomiting, CNS depression and minor cardiac features.
- 1.1% (n=121) of patients had severe signs and symptoms including coma, liver function abnormalities, severe hypotension, and metabolic changes.
- The signs and symptoms were unknown for 164 cases (1.4%) and were not applicable i.e. unrelated to poisoning for 90 cases (0.8%)

Clinical outcome of serious/unusual poisoning cases

152 cases were followed-up on account of the severity, potential severity or unusual nature of their symptoms when the NPIC was contacted. NPIC staff subsequently telephoned the hospital and spoke with members of the clinical team to determine the health outcome for the patient. In 2020, the NPIC did not routinely follow up severe cases during the initial months of the first wave of the Covid19 pandemic to relieve pressure on hospital staff in intensive care departments. Follow up enquiries resumed in June 2020.

- 97 patients who were followed up recovered completely
- 16 patients developed short-term sequelae
- 1 patient had permanent sequelae
- 9 patients died
- 4 outcomes were classified as 'not applicable' (for example, poisoning was eventually excluded as a cause for the patient's clinical condition)
- The outcome could not be determined for 25 patients

We are very grateful to nursing and medical staff for their help providing follow-up information to NPIC staff especially during a very challenging year.

Surveillance and research during Covid-19

The NPIC is in a unique position to conduct real time surveillance by monitoring emerging trends in poisoning. In 2020, the focus was naturally on poisoning with hand sanitisers, disinfectants and antibacterial cleaning agents which coincided with universal public health messages encouraging increased hand hygiene and cleaning measures to protect human health and prevent infection.

The NPIC and other poison centres around the globe experienced an increase in poisoning enquiries relating to hand sanitisers (alcohol hand gels) and bactericidal and virucidal cleaning products. In the following images, we highlight our experience of poisoning cases with disinfectants and hand sanitisers.



Disinfectants

- 268 enquiries received
- 59.7% cases aged under 10 years
- 80.2% involved ingestion
- 8.9% involved multiple exposure routes
- 28.7% cases were symptomatic



Hand Sanitisers

- 340 enquiries received
- 70.9 % cases aged under 10 years
- 90% accidental exposures
- 84.4% involved ingestion
- 22.2% cases symptomatic



Toxbase® Enquiries

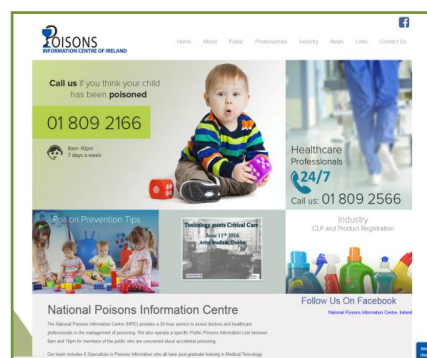
TOXBASE® is the on-line clinical toxicology database of the UK National Poisons Information Service. It is the primary toxicology database used by the NPIC to provide information on the clinical features and management of acute poisoning.

TOXBASE® is used by emergency departments and intensive care units in Ireland. In 2020, there were 16,879 Toxbase user sessions by 42 registered users in Ireland.

NPIC Website

The website **www.poisons.ie** has details on

- how to contact the NPIC for members of the public and healthcare professionals
- practical poison prevention advice
- educational resources
- information on seasonal hazards
- information for healthcare professionals
- regulatory information for industry.



The website highlights the telephone number for the Public Poisons Line so that members of the public can find it easily in an emergency.

The Industry page is frequently accessed and provides advice for companies that have to register products under EU Chemical, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) Regulations.

In 2020 we had 80,971 page views on the website with 59,859 unique visits and 5,744 return visits.

NPIC on Social Media

The National Poisons Information Centre maintains an active social media presence to increase awareness about our service and to promote poison prevention and safety in the home.

Our Facebook and Instagram (@npicireland) pages are primarily aimed at members of the public and healthcare professionals to deliver information and poisoning prevention messages. At the end of 2020, the NPIC Facebook page had 28,722 “likes” and the NPIC Instagram page had over 4,300 followers. In June 2020, a post about weever fish stings had an exceptional organic reach of over 1 million impressions, with 2.2K comments posted, 6.8K Facebook shares and 1.8K likes/reactions. The post also performed well on Instagram with 105 likes.

The NPIC Twitter account (@IrelandNpic) became active in April 2020 and is primarily aimed at healthcare professionals to promote the NPIC service, highlight information on poisoning trends and poison prevention messages, and share advice on the management of poisoning and important articles from the medical literature. At the end of 2020, the NPIC had over 500 followers and had tweeted 456 times and achieved 248.7K Tweet impressions.



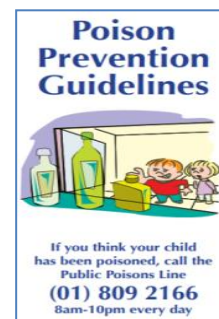
The NPIC social media platforms should not be used in case of emergency for poisoning advice as the pages are not continuously monitored.

Poison Prevention Materials

The NPIC Poison Prevention materials are available free of charge and can be ordered online by healthcare professionals and members of the public from the website www.healthpromotion.ie

The resources available to order are;

- Poison prevention leaflets
- ABC of Poisoning posters
- Key fobs



Regulatory activities



Working in partnership with the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)

- The NPIC completed the on-boarding process for the ECHA Poisons Centre Notifications (PCN) searchable database during 2020. All NPIC staff signed up for the Interact portal in order to access the searchable database. The NPIC Manager first accessed the database in July 2020, for evaluation purposes only. We deferred use by other staff until December when search functionality was improved.
- The NPIC continued to contribute to the ECHA consultation on the PCN searchable database during 2020.
- The NPIC hosted two members of the ECHA Poison Centres Team on 27 February, 2020 when they visited the centre. NPIC staff gave presentations on the organisation of the poisons centre and appointed body work, and demonstrated the databases and information systems in use.
- NPIC staff also participated in virtual meetings and discussions on:
 - How to display information from PCN dossiers (4 June)
 - Communication between appointed bodies and industry (17 June)
 - PCN reporting for appointed bodies (30 June)
- NPIC staff attended the online presentation on the outcome of the consultation on 23 September and the presentation of the new version of the searchable database on 21 December 2020.
- The NPIC premises and systems were audited for compliance with the standard security requirements and submitted the audit report and a corrective actions plan to ECHA during the third quarter of 2020.
- Beaumont Hospital and ECHA representatives signed the Service Level Agreement for the submission portal and searchable database in October 2020.

Regulatory Meetings

Patricia Casey and John Herbert attended the 33rd meeting CARACAL (REACH AND CLP) in Brussels in January 2020, and a virtual meeting with Pesticides Registration and Control Division of the Department of Agriculture to discuss CLP Article 45 and Annex VIII requirements.

Academic Activities

Lectures and Presentations

Niamh English contributed as guest lecturer for 'Clinical Toxicology in Practice' for the M.Sc. course in Toxicology and Regulatory Affairs at University College Dublin. The lecture was delivered online on 9th December.

Dr Edel Duggan presented at the Nutrivigilance Steering Group Meeting on "Outline Pilot Project: Scope, timelines, way of working, needs" on the 17th January 2020.

Peer Reviewers for Medical Journals

Nicola Cassidy is a peer reviewer for *Clinical Toxicology*.

Dr Edel Duggan and Nicola Cassidy are peer reviewers for *the European Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*.

Education and Training

John Herbert, Niamh English and Sinead Doyle attended a training workshop on the UKPID Database at the Cardiff National Poisons Information Service on 16th January 2020.

John Herbert attended meetings of the Early Warning Early Trends group on 18th February, 16th September and 1st December.

Niamh English participated in distance learning for an online Diploma in Public Sector Marketing (PSM) pros in 2020.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Webinars

Due to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, all meetings, webinars and workshops attended by staff after March 2020 took place online. Many of the virtual events were attended by several staff members.

- "Use and Potential Adverse Effects of Chloroquine and Hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19" presented by American College of Medical Toxicology (ACMT) in partnership with the European Association of Poison Centers and Clinical

Toxicologists (EAPCCT) and the Middle East and North Africa Clinical Toxicology Association (MENATOX) 25th March 2020.

- “Disinfectant Update and Best practices for Preserving PPE” presented by the American College of Medical Toxicology (ACMT) COVID19 Webinar, May 2020.
- “Introduction to the Public Health Management of Chemical Incident Response and the Role of Poison Centres” on 6th July 2020. Organised by the World Health Organisation Chemical Risk Assessment Network Secretariat in Geneva.
- “Chemicals and Covid” organised by the World health Organisation Chemical Risk Assessment Network Secretariat in Geneva and WHO European Centre for Environment and Health in Bonn took place on 7th July 2020.
- “Methanol” presented by the American College of Medical Toxicology (ACMT) COVID19 Webinar in July 2020.
- “Home safety around Europe during and after COVID19” presented by The Royal Society of Prevention for the Accidents (ROSPA) in August 2020.
- International Drug Overdose Awareness Day webinar on 31st August 2020.
- “Priorities for mental health promotion and suicide prevention before, during and after Covid-19” organised by the National Suicide Research Foundation of Ireland on 10th September, World Suicide Prevention Day.
- The NPIS CPD 2-day virtual event took place on 23rd and 24th September.
- European Association of Poisons Control Centres and Toxicologists (EAPCCT) Louis Roche Lecture and Young Investigator Awards on 13th October, 2020.
- Beaumont Hospital Grand Rounds took place weekly during the academic term time.

Patricia Casey attended the North American Congress of Clinical Toxicology (online) in September.

John Herbert attended the EMCDDA (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction) webinar entitled “COVID 19 and Drugs, Illicit drug activity on the dark net” on July 1st.

European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists Congress 2020

Although staff had abstracts accepted for presentation at 40th International Congress of the European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists (EAPCCT), the event was postponed until 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Committee membership

- Dr Edel Duggan is a member of the Clinical Standards Group with Directors from the UK National Poisons Information Service.
- Dr Edel Duggan and John Herbert are members of the Early Warning Early Trends Sub-Committee of the National Advisory Committee on Drugs.
- Dr Edel Duggan is a member of the Chemical Safety subcommittee of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.
- Patricia Casey is a member of the EAPCCT working group on harmonisation of product data.
- Patricia Casey and Nicola Cassidy are members of the European Chemicals Agency working group for the testing of the PCN portal.
- Dr Edel Duggan and Nicola Cassidy are members of the Medication Safety Information Committee at Beaumont Hospital.
- John Herbert is a member of the UK TOXBASE editing group.
- Dr Edel Duggan co-chaired the Nutrivigilance Steering Group Committee of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

NPIC Staff Meetings and Journal Club

We held weekly online meetings as well as monthly staff meetings and regular journal club meetings during the year. Some of the interesting presentations and articles presented by NPIC staff at the NPIC Journal Club meetings included;

- Opinion of the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety on “Updating the method for determining causality in reports of adverse effects in nutrivigilance”.
- Time to perforation for button batteries lodged in the esophagus. American Journal of Emergency Medicine 37 (2019) 805–809. Pelayia H. Soto, Nicole E. Reid, Toby L. Litovitz.
- Methanol as an Unlisted Ingredient in Supposedly Alcohol-Based Hand Rub Can Pose Serious Health Risk. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2018 Jul; 15(7): 1440. Chan APL and Chan TYK.
- Salt Toxicity: A systemic review and case reports. Metheny NA and Krieger MM. J Emerg Nurs 2020 Apr 24pii: S0099-1767(20)30054-4. doi: 10.1016/j.jen.2020.02.011
- CLP and Annex VIII: Notifying hazardous mixtures to the NPIC

Public Relations and Media Opportunities

The Medical Independent published an article entitled “Elevating expertise on poisons management” based on an interview of Dr Edel Duggan by Catherine Reilly that described the work of the centre and upcoming developments

The Medical Independent published an article entitled “Increased calls to the poisons centre” in August 2020 following an interview with Dr Edel Duggan.

Patricia Casey was interviewed on LMFM on 1st September and discussed prevention of poisoning from hand sanitisers.

Dr Edel Duggan was interviewed on Newstalk in December and Drivetime on RTE 1 following the publication of the NPIC’s 2019 Annual Report.

Nicola Cassidy was interviewed on Highland Radio on 14th December and discussed poisoning prevention.

Media articles featuring statistics from the 2019 Annual Report of the NPIC were posted online by the following media outlets

www.breakingnews.ie

www.irishexaminer.com

www.roscommonherald.ie

www.waterfordnews.ie

Staff wellbeing initiatives

Staff participated in weekly on-line catch-up meetings to keep in touch.

All staff participated in the National Workplace Wellbeing Day on 1/5/20 and National Walking Day on 27/9/20.



Nutrivigilance Pilot Study in collaboration with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland

Nutrivigilance is a system for detecting adverse events associated with the consumption of food, or food supplements such as vitamins and minerals.

European legislation deals with the processing, authorising, advertising and labelling of food supplements without any obligation on the companies to report adverse effects. There is currently no nutrivigilance system in Ireland. A nutrivigilance system would help protect consumers and provide early signals of emerging chemical risks where foods or food supplements were reported to be causing harm in the community.



The National Poisons Information Centre (NPIC) provides management advice to clinicians and members of the public who suspect poisoning has occurred. In 2019, multivitamins were the fourth most common enquiry to the NPIC. In consultation with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, and the Health Protection Surveillance Centre, a pilot project was set up to assess the practicalities of setting up a nutrivigilance service, based on the nutrivigilance system operating in France. Advice was sought from ANSES the organisation responsible for the nutrivigilance system in France.

A prospective nutrivigilance pilot project was conducted over 3-months by the NPIC starting at the end of 2020 and start of 2021. The project was registered with the Clinical Governance and Audit Department in Beaumont Hospital and a Data Protection Impact Assessment was submitted.

All enquiries reported to the NPIC describing symptoms following ingestion of over-the-counter multivitamins were included in the study. A causality score using established methodology was calculated for each symptom reported and subsequently validated by a newly convened nutrivigilance expert group. The study identified resources necessary to set up a nutrivigilance system in Ireland.



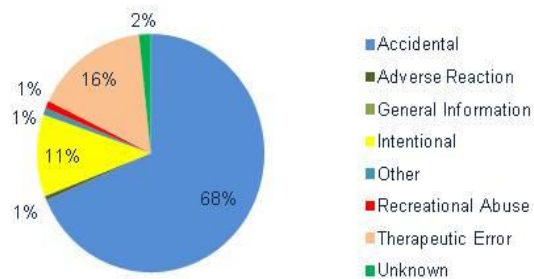
NPIC's year in numbers 2020

- 11,687 enquiries answered with 11,383 cases of human poisoning
- 54% enquiries were received from members of the public, 45% from healthcare professionals and 1% from other sources
- March was the busiest month

Demographics



Poisoning circumstances



Top 10 Agents involved in poisoning

| | |
|---|--|
| Paracetamol | |
| Ethanol / alcohol | |
| Ibuprofen | |
| Disinfectant/antiseptic/hand sanitiser/sanitising agent | |
| Multivitamins | |
| Surfactant/Detergent | |
| Fabric Cleaning Liquid Sachet/capsules | |
| Bleach with sodium hypochlorite | |
| Quetiapine | |
| Washing up Liquid | |

☎ Healthcare Professionals Line 01 809 2566
 ☎ Public Poisons Line 01 809 2166 www.poisons.ie
 @npicireland @npicireland @IrelandNpic

Contact details for the NPIC

Healthcare Professional Lines: 01 837 9964 / 809 2566 – 24hr
 Public Poisons Line: 01 809 2166 (8am – 10pm)
 Administration: 01 797 4211
 Website: www.poisons.ie
 E-mail: npicdublin@beaumont.ie
 Facebook: @NPICireland
 Instagram: @Npicireland
 Twitter: @IrelandNpic