

## **ELECTRONIC DATA EXCHANGE AS A BASIS FOR COOPERATION OF POISON CENTRES IN EUROPE ? ADVANTAGES FOR THE COMMUNITY.**

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Objective: Exposure to chemicals is part of daily human life. The prevention of human harm from chemicals during their occupation, as consumers and from exposure via the environment are major international challenges. It is of great importance that each institution that is involved in prevention, diagnosis and/or treatment of poisoning and its sequels must have appropriate information available. In the last two decades, electronic approaches have been developed worldwide for storing information, but only a few attempts have been made to exchange this information. This includes human epidemiological data, interesting cases of poisonings, and particularly data on product composition. The European states have differing approaches for the collection of composition data. Although industry is ready to support the needs of poison centres, it is interested in a uniform procedure. To utilise electronic measures for collaborative data exchange it is important to agree to a common standardised approach. In the past, some projects have shown that there is a great need not only for harmonisation of the procedures used, but also for its standardisation. Important work that has been done on a world wide level is represented by the IPCS/INTOX project. In this project, it has clearly been shown, that all data that are stored in the system that is aimed to be available for numbers of partners, should be well defined. Therefore, clear definition of all information is a crucial point of data management. For an international project dealing with data exchange there are two alternatives, (i) all partners would use a uniform system (like INTOX) or (ii) if not, they must speak the same language, which means that a standardized data exchange format and a standardized data exchange procedure must be developed. In several countries first approaches have been developed to exchange product data. Therefore there is an urgent need to use clear common definitions of terms to describe patterns (exact product names, manufacturer, distributor, ingredients, use classification etc.) to start a co-operation of industry with poison centres and with other authorities. Some years ago the EAPCCT developed a paper-based data exchange format. This format should now be transferred to an electronic basis using commonly accepted standards and definitions to increase knowledge of product compositions and thus increase quality of poison centre work.

Conclusion: There is a great challenge to enhance the use of electronic data exchange for distribution and exchange of information between poison centres. This is particularly relevant to product data, but also to human toxicity data and data on primary ingredient toxicity. For human health protection use of standardized data collection is essential and should be encouraged at the European and international level. Initially clear definitions and standard procedures have to be agreed upon.