

Seconds count in drug overdose

By JACKIE KLEN

Every second counts in accidental poisoning or drug overdose. Many lives are expected to be saved by newly installed emergency poison and overdose management information systems in Southfield's Providence Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital in Livonia. Emphasis will be on specific, step-by-step treatment.

The Posindex, an ever-growing data bank of computer-generated information on compounds and corresponding treatment, will reduce needed time from hours to seconds, said Dr. Merle Rydzek, chief of emergency medicine in Providence Hospital.

The Posindex includes compound ingredients and formula information gathered from the Department of Health Education and Welfare, pharmaceutical, commercial and industrial chemical, paint, grocery, hardware, cosmetic and over-the-counter drug industries throughout the world, Rydzek said.

THE SYSTEMS were formally presented to Providence and St. Mary's hospitals by Detroit Bank-Southfield and Detroit Bank-Livonia during an Aug. 12 reception at Botolph Inn in Farmington.

Presentations were made by Stuart K. Walthead, president of Detroit Bank-Southfield and Peter E. Fisher, president of Detroit Bank-Livonia. Systems were accepted by Southfield Mayor Donald Fracassi, Livonia Mayor Edward McNamara, Sister daver Ballance, administrator of Providence and Sister Mary Calasanta, president of St. Mary's.

The Posindex was developed by Dr. Barry Rumack, director of the Rocky Mountain Poison Center in Denver. Dr. Sidney Smock, staff physician at the Livonia Emergency System in St. Mary's Hospital and other toxicologists.

THE SYSTEM contains integrated bits of information on more than 150,000 specific compounds with detailed medical treatment for their toxic properties.

The Posindex is a system in which products are not only separated listed under brand names but by generic names, manufacturer, imprint codes, all known slang terms, abbreviations, common misspellings, product no longer manufactured and product now called, said Smock.

Users of the system are provided with a desk-sized, macrofiche reader and a notebook-sized film file of cards, each containing more than 2,000 entries. A macrofiche is a handy-sized plastic sheet on which miniature information is printed.

The system user looks in the booklet folder of macrofiche for the alphabetical sheet nearest to "unknown poison." The sheet is inserted in the macrofiche reader and an index frame is found. The index position will then refer the reader to the proper section to locate specific material.

AT THIS point, the operator can instantly find the composition of the material and is then referred to the management program carried on separate sheets located on the reader. By moving the selector arm of the system to that section, the user can immediately locate the medical management procedure for the potential poison in question.

In less than an average of 25 seconds, a hospital staff member can determine the specific product and have access to information concerning its ingredients and proper treatment. This includes related information on pharmacology, clinical effects, range of toxicity, role of the laboratory and even major published reference for case follow-up.

A national review board of more than 30 leading toxicologists, including Dr. Rumack and Dr. Smock, update the system every 90 days, adding 10,000 to 15,000 new items. A complete new set of computer-generated macrofiche is sent to each user quarterly.

THE POSINDEX system donated to Providence Hospital by Detroit Bank-Southfield is in the drug information service of the department of pharmaceutical services.

"This focal point provides maximum access to the system from both inside and outside of the hospital and is the logical source for dissemination of poison information," said Murray Lepp, assistant administrator for ambulatory services at Providence.

Special phone lines installed in the hospital's drug information service directly with the emergency department, physicians and nurses and with the general public who may call for assistance, said Providence staff physician Stuart Mitchell.

who demonstrated the Posindex during the Aug. 12 presentation.

SERVICES WILL be available to the public, and to hospital personnel at Botolph Inn, seven days a week, said Mitchell. In a pilot program, the Providence system is being used by Southfield police and Southfield Fire Department's Life Support Unit. Posindex has already been responsible for saving lives after accidental poisoning, Mitchell said.

Providence is also cooperating with the Oakland County Health Department in an education program to provide Southfield residents with important poison information. Part of a community-wide poison control program, public health nurses plan to visit Southfield elementary schools and publicize the Posindex through home visits and health department clinics.

"The addition of the poison information system adds a new dimension to the hospital's diagnostic capability and a vital and tangible addition to our community service commitment," said Sister Xavier.

Walthead said Detroit Bank-Southfield's presentation of the Posindex to the city and Providence Hospital is "further evidence of the bank's dedication to continue to be part of Southfield's growth and progress for the benefit of all persons in the community."

"WE QUICKLY recognized the importance of the Posindex system as a medical

tool which would be of great community benefit and we're pleased to cooperate with Detroit Bank-Southfield and Providence in establishing a poison information center in the hospital," said Southfield Mayor Donald Fracassi.

Southfield residents may contact the center by calling 424-3456. The Posindex system is in the emergency room at St. Mary's next to a telephone to which a special poison emergency number has been assigned for use by the public. Special communication procedures have been established between the hospital and Livonia police and fire departments in emergency situations.

St. Mary's medical staff will be familiarized with use of the system and communication will link the emergency room with physicians and nurses throughout the hospital. Hospital personnel will foster an awareness of Posindex throughout Livonia and education programs are being formulated for disseminating poison prevention information to students and adults.

"POSINDEX HAS more than proved its worth and effectiveness and we believe the system will render a valuable service to communities we serve," said Sister Mary Calasanta.

Fisher said Detroit Bank-Livonia has long recognized its obligation to the community beyond providing a full range of financial services.

A phone call can save a life

If you've just swallowed a pink mushroom or your child took a taste of furniture polish, you can call the new poison information center at Southfield's Providence Hospital.

If you live in Livonia or environs and you or yours have accidentally ingested a toxic substance or drug, don't hesitate to call the center on St. Mary's Hospital. Detroit Bank-Southfield and Detroit Bank-Livonia, donors of the Posindex computer systems, have printed labels to affix to your home telephone. The Providence center number is 424-3456 and at St. Mary's it's 464-4444.

"We expect to get calls from persons asking, 'How many pills do I have to take to kill myself,'" said Dr. Sidney N. Smock, staff physician at St. Mary's and one of the developers of Posindex. "We don't supply that information."

"WE'VE BEEN looking at the system and have been considering installing a phone in Hines Park. Seriously, physicians are only human and they can't assimilate atrocities in chemical plants. The Posindex provides instant information."

The relatively inexpensive computer bank is replaced every three months as new compounds which may be dangerous are developed, he said.

"Aspirin is the most common poison for children under five years of age," Smock noted. "The drug kills more kids than anything else. But the Posindex contains 150,000 entries with detailed medical treatment for their toxic elements. These can

be identified by hospital personnel looking at cards."

Medical experts are examining the poison thylene glycol often used in antifreeze, as a possible cause of the mysterious illness that killed 27 persons at the American Legion convention last month, Smock said.

"IF WE were involved in the investigation, we would use Posindex to discover all products contained in ethylene glycol, the trade name, who makes it, how it's made available to the public, clinical effects, and toxic side effects to determine treatment if the poison should endanger other lives," he said.

We would also be fed laboratory data and determine how much of the toxic substance has been ingested. This applies to any suspected poison of drug brand names are indexed phonetically. If laymen have trouble pronouncing them."

Dr. Stuart Mitchell of Providence Hospital said the poison center information system in the pharmaceutical department is practical. Pharmacists, familiar with ingredients in substances, answer calls from the public and contact the emergency room if necessary.

"DIFFERENT SUBSTANCES with toxic effects call for a variety of treatments," Mitchell said. "In some cases, the best procedure is to induce vomiting. In other instances, this can be harmful. If the victim doesn't respond to treatment at home or hasn't been immediately cared for, he should be rushed to the hospital emergency room."

Smock noted that the system also provides street names for certain drugs like crystal, which is the slang term for cocaine. Posindex also contains scientific terms, misspelled names and information about capsules including colors and labels.

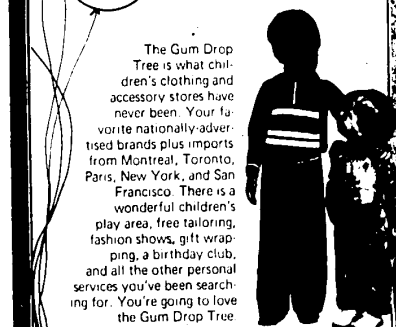
"We can determine, for instance, a yellow capsule with an 'A' on it is a barbiturate made by Abbott. We recommend the drug industry be forced to label products so drugs can be identified."

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Israelis are counselors

Youngsters attending Fresh Air Society camps programs at Camp Tamarack in Brighton and Orionville are learning about Israel and its culture first-hand this summer from 18 Israelis participating in a summer shlichim program.

The Israelis serve both as general counselors and specialists in the fields of music, dance, drama, crafts and cultural programs.

"They come to Camp Tamarack as cultural exchange students," said Sam Marcus, Fresh Air Society executive vice-president. "Using shlichim or Israeli communal emissaries provides many advantages for the American staff and campers."

The program is jointly sponsored by the Jewish Welfare Board, the Association of Jewish Community Centers and Camps in the United States and Canada, along with the Youth and Hechikutz Department of the World Zionist Organization and the American Zionist Youth Foundation.

According to Marcus, the Israeli dimension in the summer camp strengthens the relationships between the Jewish youth of Israel and the United States, enhancing religious and cultural programs, and introducing American Jewish youth to the state of Israel and its people.

The Israelis, ages 19 to 28, come from varied backgrounds. "The men and women come from small towns, cities, farms and kibbutzim," Marcus said. "All have served in the army."

Presently, there are 44 shlichim participating in the program throughout the U.S. The group arrived in the United States in mid-June in time for orientation to camp. Many will remain for a short time after the summer camp season ends to travel and visit other parts of the country, Marcus said.

The Fresh Air Society, a member of the Jewish Welfare Federation, is a beneficiary agency of the Allied Jewish Campaign and the United Foundation.

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