

Information on poisoning

Updated 5/2018

Introduction

It is increasingly common for the National Poisons Information Service (NPIS) to be asked to provide statistical information about enquiry workload or clinical toxicology expertise in the analysis of information or drafting of documents. This document explains the resources that are available and the circumstances in which NPIS information may be provided.

It should be noted that NPIS is not a source of data on the epidemiology of poisoning in the UK other than based on the TOXBASE accesses and telephone enquiries it receives.

NPIS data are not necessarily evidence of prevalence. Other sources of such data include centrally collected, coded data on hospital activity and mortality data in England and Wales and Scotland.

NPIS does not perform literature searches for 3rd parties.

Statistics

Before requesting or identifying data from the sources detailed below it may be helpful to first identify specific WHO International Classification of Disease (ICD) codes of interest i.e. of interest for your research purpose as you might be required to provide these. The most current version (ICD 10) can be found at <http://apps.who.int/classifications/apps/icd/icd10online/> (viewed 2/2018).

Hospital Data

In England:

Information on inpatient, outpatient, maternity and A&E data are available via NHS Digital (www.NHSDigital.NHS.UK)

In Wales:

Certain patient data are freely available on the Health Statistics Wales (HSW) website (www.wales.nhs.uk)

In Scotland:

Certain inpatient and limited A&E data are freely available via the Information Services Division (ISD), Scotland website (www.isdscotland.org) and more specific requests for information can be submitted to ISD directly by emailing NSS.isdSHIS@nhs.net or by telephoning 0131 275 7050.

In Northern Ireland:

Limited data are available on line (www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/doh-statistics-and-research).

Mortality data

The way in which UK mortality statistics are collected is similar to the way in which hospital and A&E department statistics are collected, in that they are collected separately by individual UK countries and coded in the same way using the ICD codes.

In England and Wales:

The Office of National Statistics collects mortality statistics for England and Wales (www.ons.gov.uk), the collection of mortality statistics is overseen by the General Register Office (www.gro.gov.uk), which is part of the Identity and Passport Service. The births and deaths section of the GRO can be contacted via telephone (01633456490) or email (mortality@ons.gsi.gov.uk).

In Scotland:

Mortality statistics are collected by the General Registry Office for Scotland, they can be contacted by telephone (0131 334 0380), by email via their contact page (www.nrscotland.gov.uk/) or by visiting/writing to:

New Register House
3 West Register Street
Edinburgh
Scotland
EH1 3YT.

In Northern Ireland:

Mortality statistics are administered by the General Registry Office for Northern Ireland (<https://geni.nidirect.gov.uk/>). The General Registry Office for Northern Ireland can be contacted by telephone ([028 9038 8400](tel:02890388400)), by email (info@nisra.gov.uk) or by writing to:

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
Colby House
Stranmillis Court
BELFAST
BT9 5RR.

NPIS Resources available

(a) Statistical data: The statistical data NPIS holds includes the numbers of telephone enquiries received with individual agents or groups of drugs and the frequency of TOXBASE accesses for different entries. NPIS can provide fully anonymised aggregated data but enquirers should be aware that it may not be possible to provide data in this format for rare poisonings due to the possibility of inadvertent identification of individuals.

(b) Clinical toxicology expertise: NPIS staff may also be able to comment on documents relating to poisoning, such as the overdose sections of summaries of product characteristics (SPC) for drugs, or provide expertise on the interpretation of toxicological information.

(c) Research: NPIS is able to perform collaborative prospective studies relating to specific drugs or groups. Such research needs to comply with research governance requirements, including the need for ethical and RM&G approval when appropriate.

Provision of information

The provision of this type of information does not form part of the routine work of the NPIS. Current NPIS policy is as follows:

Enquirers are asked to look at the NPIS annual reports. These contain data on call numbers and internet accesses for some specific drug groups.

If the data required are not found in a previous annual report, NPIS may agree to supply this. However, since the provision of information is not a core function of the service and time consuming for staff, this is usually only done

- (i) as part of a collaborative research or audit project, or
- (ii) following a formal request from a government agency, or
- (iii) when the costs of information provision can be met.

The decision on information provision is made at the discretion of the NPIS Clinical Standards Group, who may also seek advice from the Commissioner of the service.

Time required

Routine information requests are considered at Clinical Standard Group meetings. These take place 4 times annually. A decision can be provided more quickly for genuinely urgent requests.

The time required to provide information depends on its complexity and an estimate can be provided in advance.

Fee Structure

Information that requires work from a Specialist in Poisons Information Officer (e.g. TOXBASE accesses or enquiry statistics) is charged at an hourly rate of £150. Work performed by Clinical Toxicologists is charged at an hourly rate of £300.

Historic data (prior to April 2008) is particularly complex to access since it is held in individual units and the costs of this are therefore proportionately higher.

It is possible to attach questionnaires relating to individual entries within the TOXBASE database. This requires some degree of programming and the cost for this would need to be negotiated.

An estimate of the amount of work required can be provided in advance.

However, although these estimates are made in good faith, no guarantee can be given that the work will be achieved in the time initially stated. If it appears that costs will be greater than initially estimated, a revised estimate will be provided.

Contact

If you wish to seek further information for a collaborative project in the first instance you should contact the Chairman of the NPIS Clinical Standards Group, preferably by email.

Please e-mail

mail@TOXBASE.org