

Occupational Health and Safety Act.

In the absence of specific legislation requiring products labelled 'poison' or 'keep out of reach of children' to be placed on higher shelves in retail outlets, stores do have a duty of care to protect the safety of visitors to their stores. In this regard, self-service type stores would minimise the risk of toxic exposure to children as well as mitigate their legal liability if the stores heeded the warning on the label and kept products out of reach of children.

CONCLUSION

These survey results highlight a need for standardisation of packaging of poisons or products labelled 'keep out of reach of children' as well as better quality control of child-resistant packaging. The true burden of illness caused by childhood poisoning in retail premises may not be recognised because of the lack of specific surveillance data kept by Australian health authorities. However, accidental child poisoning injuries would be reduced if the label warning 'keep out of reach of children' was heeded in all settings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Dr Craig Dalton, Director, and Ms Lynette Oakes, Hunter Public Health Unit; the cooperation and advice from the Australian Institute of Supermarkets, NSW Workcover Authority, NSW Department of Fair Trading, NSW Department of Agriculture, National Registration Authority for Agriculture and Veterinary Chemicals; and data supplied from the Victorian Injury Surveillance System, Monash University Accident Research Centre and the Kidsafe Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia, Western Australia Division.

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THE DELIVERY OF POISONS INFORMATION IN AUSTRALIA: NATIONAL MEETING JULY 30

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A national meeting of pharmacists, toxicologists and representatives from the State departments of health and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care was held to examine the current ability of poisons information centres in Australia to deliver quality poisons information to clinicians and the public in a cost-effective manner.

The major objective of this meeting was to seek a national consensus on the best model for delivering poisons information services nation-wide, including providing professional toxicological advice and disaster response. This national model will need to consider potential significant increases to service usage caused by new labelling requirements and an increased capacity for response to disaster. The meeting sought agreement on the most appropriate mechanism to insure that funding arrangements are secure and responsive to changes in the demand for services.

It is anticipated that the report emanating from this national level planning for poisons services will be considered by the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council (AHMAC). There was agreement on a preferred model for delivering those services. Other significant issues discussed included the need to ensure appropriate remuneration for clinical toxicologists participating in the service and formulating an identified body of work to be undertaken to ensure that the clinical reporting system delivers useful information to an agreed set of users. Adopting national standards for workforce development, and employment opportunities for poisons information centres and professional support staff, are also perceived as critical to ensuring the continuation of adequate levels of staffing for all poisons information services in Australia.

For further details or for information concerning the outcomes of this meeting, please contact Ms Pam Albany, Principal Policy Officer, Injury Prevention Policy Unit, NSW Department of Health, by telephone on (02) 9391 9679, or by email at palba@doh.health.nsw.gov.au.