

Patient Characteristics, Volume and Referral Patterns in the First Year of a 24/7 Bedside Toxicology Service

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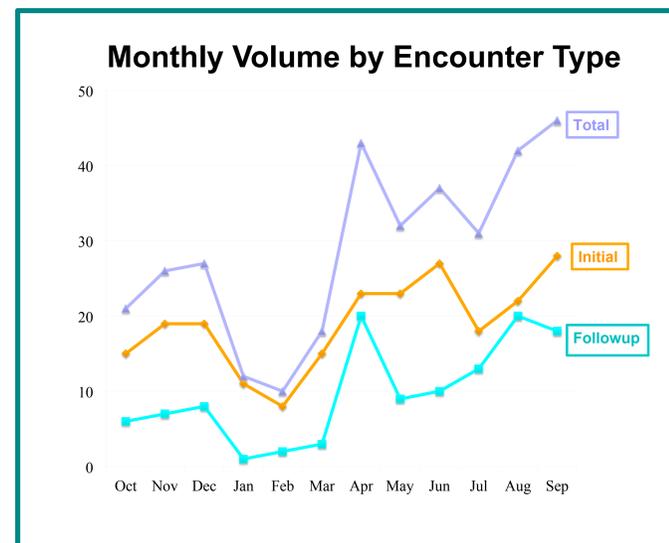
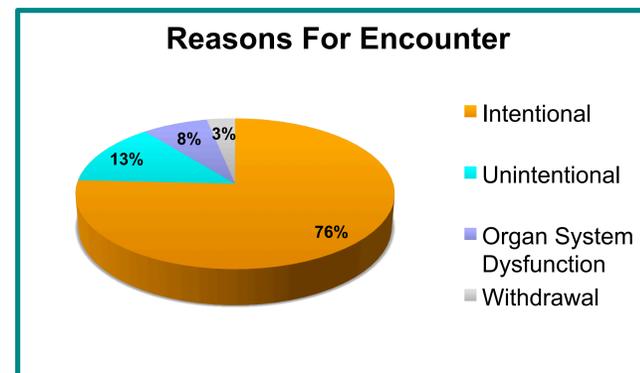
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Background: The establishment of a full-time bedside toxicology consultation service offers many benefits to an institution. However, establishing administrative and salary support for this endeavor requires an understanding of projected volume, sources of referral, and indications for consultation beyond the acute overdose. We describe our experience in the first year offering a 24/7 full-time consultation service.

Setting:

- Tertiary community hospital setting
- 600 inpatient beds including Children's Hospital
- Annual ED volume 85,000
- 3 board-certified medical toxicologists available at all times by phone and for bedside consultation
- Volume-based financial support was provided by Department of Emergency Medicine.
- No trainees involved for first year
- Inpatient and ED consults only



Results:

- 201 patients/initial consults, 144 followup visits
- Encounter volume rose from 0.67/day in month 1 to 1.03/day in month 12 (range 0.35-1.35)
- Average 28.7 (range 10-42) per month
- Patient data: average age 36.3 years (median 36y, range 12mo-88y), 52% female.
- Reasons for encounter: intentional (70%), unintentional (12.4%), organ system dysfunction (7%), and withdrawal (3%).
- 14% of cases involved an adverse drug reaction.
- Referral sources: ED (83%), admitting service (13)%
- Initial consult location: ED (61.1%), inpatient floor (20.8%), and ICU (35.8%).

- **Conclusion:** We observed a steady increase throughout the first year and varied indications for consult. Volume and referral patterns reported in our experience can be expected in similarly sized and staffed institutions. Future directions include establishment of outpatient services and diversifying referral sources via educational, academic and administrative collaboration with other departments

