

Medical Toxicology Physician Admitting Service Saves Healthcare Dollars and Lives

A study published in the Journal of Medical Toxicology found that hospitalized poisoned patients who were primarily cared for by medical toxicology physicians had better outcomes than similar patients cared for by non-medical toxicology physicians. Outcomes studied included length of stay, cost, and mortality.

Phoenix, Arizona ([PRWEB](#)) August 26, 2014 -- A study published this week in the Journal of Medical Toxicology (JMT), the official journal of the American College of Medical [Toxicology](#) (ACMT), found that patients diagnosed with ‘poisoning and toxic effects of drugs’ experienced better outcomes when managed primarily by medical toxicologists, physicians with expertise in the care of poisoned patients, compared to physicians without similar expertise. The study looked at data from patients admitted to seven hospitals in Arizona using a database maintained by Premier Inc.®, commonly used in studies of healthcare quality outcome measures. Patients cared for by [medical toxicologists](#) were compared to patients with similar diagnoses but cared for by non-medical toxicologists.

The study authors specifically analyzed length of stay, cost, and mortality in patients with poisoning-related diagnoses. They compared the results to expected outcomes for similar patients based on national data. They found that having care managed directly by a medical toxicologist was associated with a shorter length of stay in the hospital, lower cost, and greater decrease in expected mortality rates. While the specific reasons for the favorable outcomes were not studied, the authors suggested several possible factors. Expertise developed through specialized training in the diagnosis and management of poisoning likely enabled the medical toxicologists to more rapidly recognize signs of [poisoning](#), anticipate complications, withhold unnecessary testing because of confidence in their diagnoses, and rapidly and safely administer antidotal therapies that other physicians may be uncomfortable using.

[Medical toxicologists](#) provide consultative services to poison centers and to many treating physicians in hospitals nationwide. However, medical toxicology admitting services, where patients are admitted and primarily cared for by medical toxicologists, are very uncommon. While previous studies have demonstrated the cost-saving benefit of poison centers, no study has specifically looked at the effect of a medical toxicology admitting service on patient outcomes and healthcare costs. According to Steven Curry, MD, the study’s lead author and Director of the Department of Medical Toxicology at Banner Good Samaritan Medical Center, “This study confirms that both patients and society benefit when medical toxicologists manage the care of poisoned patients. Our medical center has supported this practice model for years and we hope to see expansion of medical toxicology services to more health care systems in the future.”

ACMT is a professional, non-profit association of physicians with recognized expertise in medical toxicology. The College is dedicated to advancing the science and practice of medical toxicology through a variety of activities.