



Editorials

March Special Issue

Norman Goldstein MD
Editor

This Special Issue honors the Hawaii Poison Center—helping physicians, nurses and the general public for 40 years.

Last year the Center received more than 12,000 calls for help and information. One in five calls came from health professionals.

Guest editors John Racine, PhD, RN is an Assistant Professor in University of Hawaii—Manoa School of Nursing and Chair of the Education Research Committee of the Hawaii Poison Center and Alson S. Inaba, MD Associate Professor of Pediatrics in the John A. Burns School of Medicine and Medical Director of the Hawaii Poison Center, have provided a very special Special Issue.

This issue belongs in every pediatric, family practice, and internal medical practice office as well as every emergency room in the State! It is an extremely valuable source of practical information on clinical toxicology and the operations of the Poison Control Center.

Mahalo to John Racine, Al Inaba, and Debbie Ahina, manager of the Hawaii Poison Center for a superb Special Edition.

A limited number of extra copies are available at the Journal office. Call 536-7702, ext. 2239 for more information.

Guest Editors

Clinical Toxicology and the Hawaii Poison Center

John F. Racine, PhD, RN and Alson S. Inaba MD
Guest Editors

We appreciate the opportunity to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Hawaii Poison Center (HPC) with this special issue of the *Hawaii Medical Journal* on Clinical Toxicology and the Hawaii Poison Center. Poisoning is a serious health problem, with which clinicians are probably familiar, particularly if they have family, internal medicine, or pediatric practices. Usually classified as an injury, poisoning is the third leading cause of unintentional deaths in the United States.¹ The call volume of the HPC, almost 12,000 calls in 1996-1997, indicates that it is also an issue in our State. As an analysis of these calls in this issue has shown, clinicians also seek the expertise and information from the specialized databases of the Center, comprising 13 percent of all callers. For an inside look at operations and some of the specific queries received by the Center, another article in the Journal provides a sense of the resources available for health professionals and the protocols followed for victims.

In this issue, several features are provided for the continuing education of clinicians. First of all, a systematic approach to assessment of the poisoned child, the most likely victim, is presented. Secondly, there are questions to challenge current clinical knowledge of toxicology, accompanied by their answers. Third, since acute poisoning usually presents in panic, clinical techniques for crisis intervention and emergency counseling are reviewed in a case study. Finally, selected references from the print and electronic databases of the Hawaii Medical Library are recommended for further investigation into clinical toxicology.

It is very appropriate for the Journal to dedicate a special issue to this topic on the 40th anniversary of the Hawaii Poison Center. The Journal had published a study by Dr L. T. Chun in 1951, reprinted in this issue, which called attention to kerosene poisoning among children, as well as articles by Drs Ho and Char over the years. The dissemination of this research helped to alert the medical community about this serious health problem in our community and resulted in the creation of the Hawaii Poison Center. These medical leaders were sought out to reconstruct the history of poisoning in Hawaii and the origins of the Center which is recounted in this issue. Poisoning, as stated above, continues to be a problem in the State of Hawaii. The Hawaii Poison Center, as suggested in the economic analysis discussed in the issue, is a low cost and accessible alternative to the treatment of poisoning emergencies and offers benefits to the public, providers, and third party payers.

We again thank Dr Goldstein and the *Journal* for reminding the medical community that the problem of poisoning persists. We believe that the Hawaii Poison Center deserves all of our support in order to continue providing the specialized and expert resources in preventing and managing human poisoning in our State.

References

1. Rivara FP, Grossman DC, Cummings P: Injury prevention: First of two parts. *NEJM* 1997; 337:543-548.



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