



NEWS RELEASE

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AAPCC Launches “Unquestionable Answers” Campaign

ALEXANDRIA, VA. – The American Association of Poison Control Centers and the experts at America’s 57 poison centers are encouraging young adults, specifically those of college age, to call the Poison Help hotline instead of searching the Internet for answers to poisoning questions, according to Debbie Carr, AAPCC executive director.

Young adults ages 18 through 24 can find themselves in new and expected situations as they leave home for college, work or military service. Some of these situations involve potential poisonings, whether that means a venomous bite or sting, a drug of abuse, alcohol poisoning, or a medication mistake.

“With the Internet at our fingertips, it is tempting to search online for medical information,” Carr said. “Many people feel the anonymity of the Internet helps them avoid the fear and embarrassment of calling 911 or going to the ER. However, calling the Poison Help hotline will connect you to experts at your local poison center who will answer any poison-related question, no matter how seemingly trivial. They provide the confidentiality of the Internet but with an immediate, expert answer.”

On April 10, the AAPCC and poison centers around the country launched the Unquestionable Answers e-poster campaign throughout various social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter and blogs. The e-posters feature questions (some are funny, some less so) that really should be answered by the doctors, nurses and pharmacists at poison centers. The goal of “Unquestionable Answers” is to encourage young adults to call their local poison center when they have a poisoning emergency or questions about potential poisonings. The theme is “Stop searching; just call.”

According to a national survey of adults by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, except for senior citizens, people ages 18 through 24 are:

- Less likely than other adults to be familiar with poison control centers and the 1-800-222-1222 Poison Help number.
- Less likely to be aware that poison control hotline is a free service, available 24 hours a day.
- Less likely to know that poison centers take calls about adult medication mistakes.

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“What is also worrisome is that this group is much more likely than other demographic groups to search the Internet for information about a potential poisoning,” Carr said. According to the HRSA survey, more people are turning to the Internet as a source of [poison] information, from 6 percent in 2006, compared to 25 percent in 2011.

According to the experts at America’s 57 poison centers, the problem with relying on Internet information is the question of the quality and reliability of that information. In a chat room, there is no way to verify the expertise of the person you are chatting with, and it is difficult to assess which of the thousands of pages of search results might hold the answer to your urgent situation. Valuable time can be lost in the search process.

The 57 poison centers around the U.S. provide immediate, expert advice to all callers, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The calls are fully confidential and free.

“The Unquestionable Answers campaign was created for the American Association of Poison Control Centers as part of the University of Miami’s 2012 ‘PhilAdthropy’ project,” Carr said. “Many thanks to team leader, Dayna Bieber, and UM students Kari Scharf, Catherine Johns, Kelly Smith, Jordan Colleran and Eric Karbeling. Thanks also to the Florida Poison Information Center-Miami for spearheading the campaign.”

To see the campaign, visit the AAPCC Facebook page at www.facebook.com/aapcc, follow @aapcc on Twitter, and read the AAPCC’s blog at www.aapcc.wordpress.com.

For more information, the media may contact Loreeta Canton, AAPCC communications manager, at 703.894.1863 or canton@aapcc.org or Brett Schuster, communications assistant, at 703.894.1859 or schuster@aapcc.org.

The AAPCC supports the nation’s 57 poison centers in their efforts to treat and prevent drug, consumer product, animal, environmental and food poisoning. Members staff the Poison Help hotline at 1-800-222-1222 that provides free, confidential, expert medical advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year from toxicology specialists, including nurses, pharmacists, physicians and poison information providers. In addition, the AAPCC maintains the only poison information and surveillance database in the United States, providing real-time monitoring of unusual poisoning patterns, chemical exposures and other emerging public health hazards. The AAPCC partners with federal agencies such as EPA, HRSA and the CDC, as well as private industry.

To learn more, visit www.aapcc.org, like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, or read our blog at aapcc.wordpress.com. To join your voice with other poison center supporters, register for the AAPCC advocacy network at www.capwiz.com/aapcc – click on “Action E-List.”