

Information calls to the Belgian Poison Centre concerning teratological risk

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Objective: The reporting of information calls where the teratological risks of use of certain agents during pregnancy were questioned.

Methods: All information calls concerning pregnancy and teratological risks to the BPC from 2018 to 2022 were analyzed. Non-medical agents were first classified according to use and medicines further following the ATC classification.

These agents were then classified whether their use is known to be dangerous or safe during pregnancy based on the online databases Cybele.be and Lareb.nl or whether an estimation is not possible due to lack of data.

The last step was to check whether the timing of these calls coincided with normal working hours where it is easy to contact a specialised medical professional or outside of them.

Results: There were calls for 565 agents. Of these agents, 63.7% (N=360) were medicines, 9.7% (N=55) biocides and 26.5% (N=150) were other agents such as phytotherapeutic pharmaceuticals, illicit drugs, food, or not otherwise specified agents. Within the group of medicinal products, those with action on the nervous system accounted for 31.9% (N=115), for the respiratory system 21.7% (N=78), for the digestive system 13.3% (N=48), for antiparasitic medicines together with anti-infectives 17.8% (N=64) and for the other groups 15.3% (N=55). For 72.2% (N=408) of these agents the use during pregnancy was rated as safe and for 6.5% (N=37) as dangerous. In 6.5% (N=37) data were missing to estimate the teratological risk.

The call came in at a time when it is difficult to consult a specialist medical professional for 56.5% (N=319) of these agents.

Conclusion: Our results show that there is a necessity for immediate teratologic information in Belgium. Existing hesitancy or unavailability of specialised medical professionals might encourage people to contact the BPC for these of inquiries. Specially as the BPC is available 24/7 free of charge and teratology could be seen as closely related to or even a part of toxicology. Further, our results can encourage the debate if a distinct teratology information service in Belgium is warranted and, if so, they can help to outline the features of such a service and its relationship with other medical professionals and services as the BPC.



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