

EDITORIAL

Evaluating the impact of drug toxicity

Many studies of adverse drug reactions (ADRs) are epidemiological, i.e. they describe the prevalence of ADRs in children in hospital, the community or selected patient groups. These studies are important in quantifying the extent of the problem. The prevalence of ADRs in children in hospital is, however, now well established. We know from a systematic review of prospective studies that the incidence of ADRs in children in hospital is 9.5% and that 2% paediatric admissions to hospital are due to ADRs¹. It is important, therefore, for researchers to be asking new questions and exploring new areas.

Bellaire and colleagues are to be congratulated for extending the study of the impact of ADRs from that of direct toxicity of the drug to the psychological impact of the ADR on the child's parents². The health-related quality of life in children who have experienced ADRs is an area of research which has previously been neglected.

The group from Western Ontario would be the first to accept that there are limitations to their

study and they have highlighted some of these in their discussion. They have, however, opened up an important new area of research – the psychological effects of ADRs in children. It is to be hoped that they and others continue to work in this area. Future studies will hopefully be prospective and establish the viewpoints of children as well as their parents.

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