



For Immediate Release
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Biological, Chemical and Nuclear Treatment Guidelines Available for Free Download
Information could save lives through early identification and treatment of terror agents

(CHICAGO) — If a biological, chemical or nuclear attack occurs, health care providers will be ready with vital information they need to save lives right in the palms of their hands. Thanks to a new program, health professionals and terrorism first-responders may now download complete biological, chemical, nuclear and radiation treatment guidelines to handheld personal digital devices – free of charge.

“The guidelines will help doctors, nurses and other health care professionals immediately identify, treat and report a wide range of bioterrorist and chemical agents,” said Dr. Michael S. Wahl, managing medical director of the Illinois Poison Control Center (IPC). “The quicker we can respond, the better chance we have to save the lives of victims and prevent diseases from spreading.”

The program, which is the first of its kind to be offered by a public health department, was developed by the IPC in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Illinois chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and PEPID LLC, a firm specializing in point-of-care clinical references. It is funded by a grant from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration Bioterrorism Hospital Preparedness program.

The guidelines give point-by-point instructions for identifying and treating potential bioterrorist agents, such as anthrax, smallpox, plague and ricin; chemical weapons, such as cyanide and nerve gas; and radiation sickness. The program also includes a terrorism-specific drug interaction generator which can alert clinicians on potential harmful interactions between antidotes used to combat malicious agents and other medications the patients already may be taking.

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Health care professionals can access the treatment guidelines at the IPC Web site, www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org. They will be asked to fill out a simple registration form (for reporting purposes only) and can then download the program with a click of a button. The program works on the two most common PDA operating systems, Palm and PocketPC. The same content also will run in HTML format in a Web-based program accessible through a personal computer.

“The Illinois Poison Center is excited to be a part of this project,” Dr. Wahl said. “It will increase the speed and effectiveness with which we can respond to terrorist threats.”

The downloadable treatment guidelines are part of a larger bioterrorism preparedness project the IPC has been working on with the Illinois Department of Public Health. Last year, the Illinois Poison Center helped create treatment guidelines for hospital emergency departments; a flip chart for EMS professionals; a bioterrorism syndromes poster; and fact sheets for the general public regarding potential bioterrorist and chemical agents. The poison center also conducts bioterrorism preparedness courses for health care professionals throughout the year.

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The Illinois Poison Center is the only certified, regional poison center in Illinois, serving more than 12 million residents in 102 counties – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – via a national, toll-free number, 1-800-222-1222. Calling the toll-free hot line will connect callers with their designated local poison center at any time from anywhere in the United States; all calls placed in Illinois are routed to the IPC. Staffed by pharmacists, physicians, nurses and poison information providers, the IPC provides poison prevention information and treatment advice to the public and health care professionals on alcohol and drug misuse, medication problems, bites and stings, occupational accidents and other poisonings.

The IPC is a program of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council, an association comprising more than 140 hospitals and health care organizations working together to improve the quality of health care services in the Chicago area.