



## The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System

Serving New Jersey Since 1983

### Press Release

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## Members Wanted

### Unintentional Drug Overdose Death Study Group

Nationally, although unintentional deaths from injuries have decreased in general, unintentional deaths from prescription, non-prescription and illicit drugs have increased, in fact reaching near epidemic proportions. The recent case of Heath Ledger brings this problem directly to the front page.

Between the years of 2000 to 2007, the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES) received more than 450,000 reports of human poisoning-related exposures. Of this, prescription and over-the-counter drug exposures accounted for more than 40% of the total. The prescription-multiple-drug exposures posed a significant health impact to the New Jersey residents based on the following facts:

- Among all human exposures in the state of New Jersey, prescription-multiple-drug exposures increased from 10.5% in 2000 to nearly 15% in 2007, a 40% increase in 8 years.
- More than 60% of prescription-multiple-drug exposures occurred to individuals 20 to 64 years old.
- As compared to over-the-counter-drug exposures, cases with prescription-multiple-drug exposures were more likely to result in a more serious medical outcome including death.

To respond to the increased prescription-multiple-drug exposures trend, the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System is coordinating the development of a study group to look into the increased number of unintentional drug overdose deaths in the state. The study group, consisting currently of members from interested agencies/institutions such as the US Drug Enforcement Agency, New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, The New Jersey State Medical Examiners Office, The New Jersey State Toxicology Laboratory, New Jersey Department of Children and Families Services, Law School of the Seton Hall University, Department of Criminal Justice of Rutgers University, New Jersey Medical School, and North Jersey Community Research Initiative will explore the impact on the citizens of the state and attempt to plan an approach to effecting a change in these rates.

Any organization or individual who wishes to join the group are urged to call Dr. Alvin Chu at 973-972-9280.

located at University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey

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