



IS THERE AN IMPACT OF WWW.POISONCENTRE.BE AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CALLS TO THE BELGIAN POISON CENTRE?

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OBJECTIVE

We examined whether the Belgian Poison Centre (BPC) website and social media have an influence on the number and type of telephone calls to the BPC.

METHODS

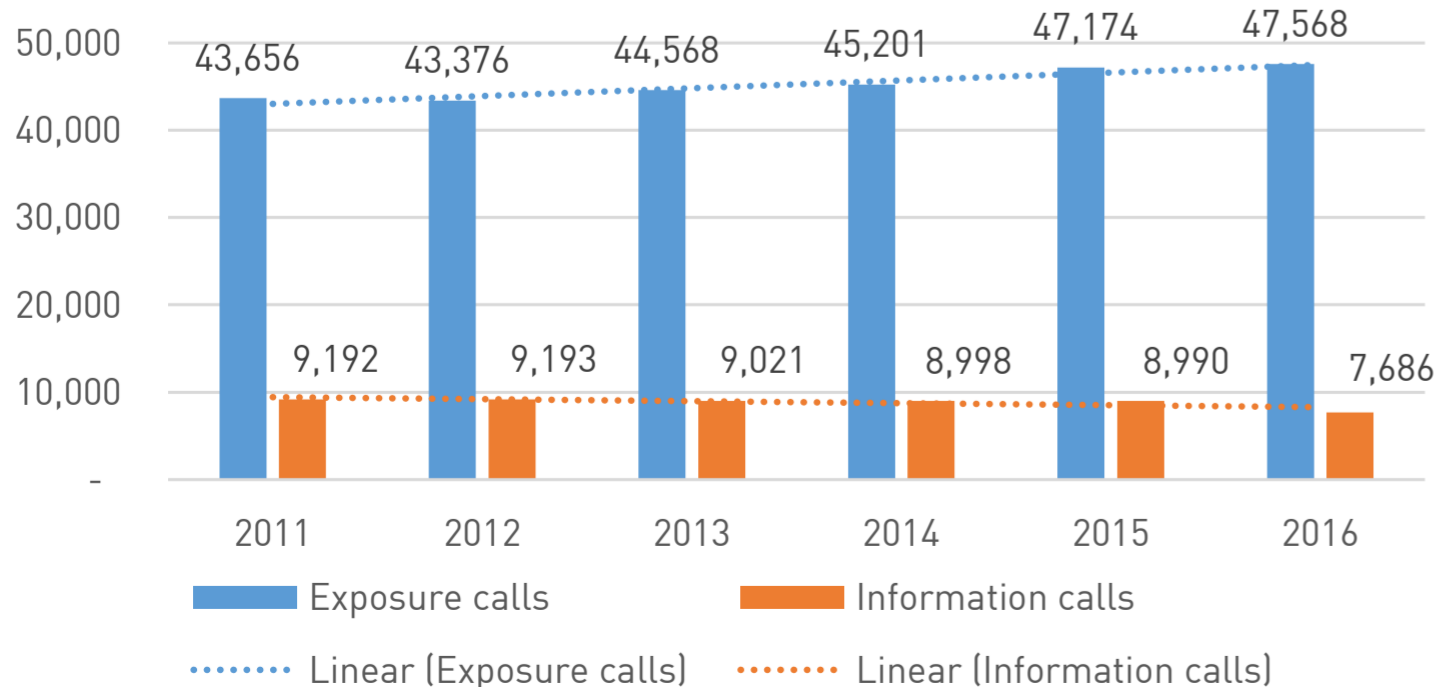
The BPC launched a renewed website in 2014 and introduced a Facebook page and Twitter account in 2015. We analyzed the use of www.poisoncentre.be, the BPC Facebook page and Twitter account during 2014-2016 and investigated if there was a difference between 2011-2013 and 2014-2016 in the evolution of the number and type of calls to the BPC.

Furthermore, we examined in a survey the probability of first consulting internet for patients with unintentional poisonings before calling the BPC. All unintentional cases (n=485) from 1,045 calls to the BPC during 7 days in February/March 2016, were included. In the week following the call, 404 patients could be contacted by phone.

RESULTS

Between 2011 and 2016 the number of calls to the BPC increased from 52,848 to 55,254 (+ 4.6%). Exposure calls increased from 43,656 to 47,568 (+ 9%) while information calls decreased from 9,192 to 7,686 (- 16.4%). The evolution towards a higher proportion of exposure calls largely took place after renewing the website, introducing Facebook and Twitter, with 5.2% more exposure calls and 14.6% less information calls (2013-2016).

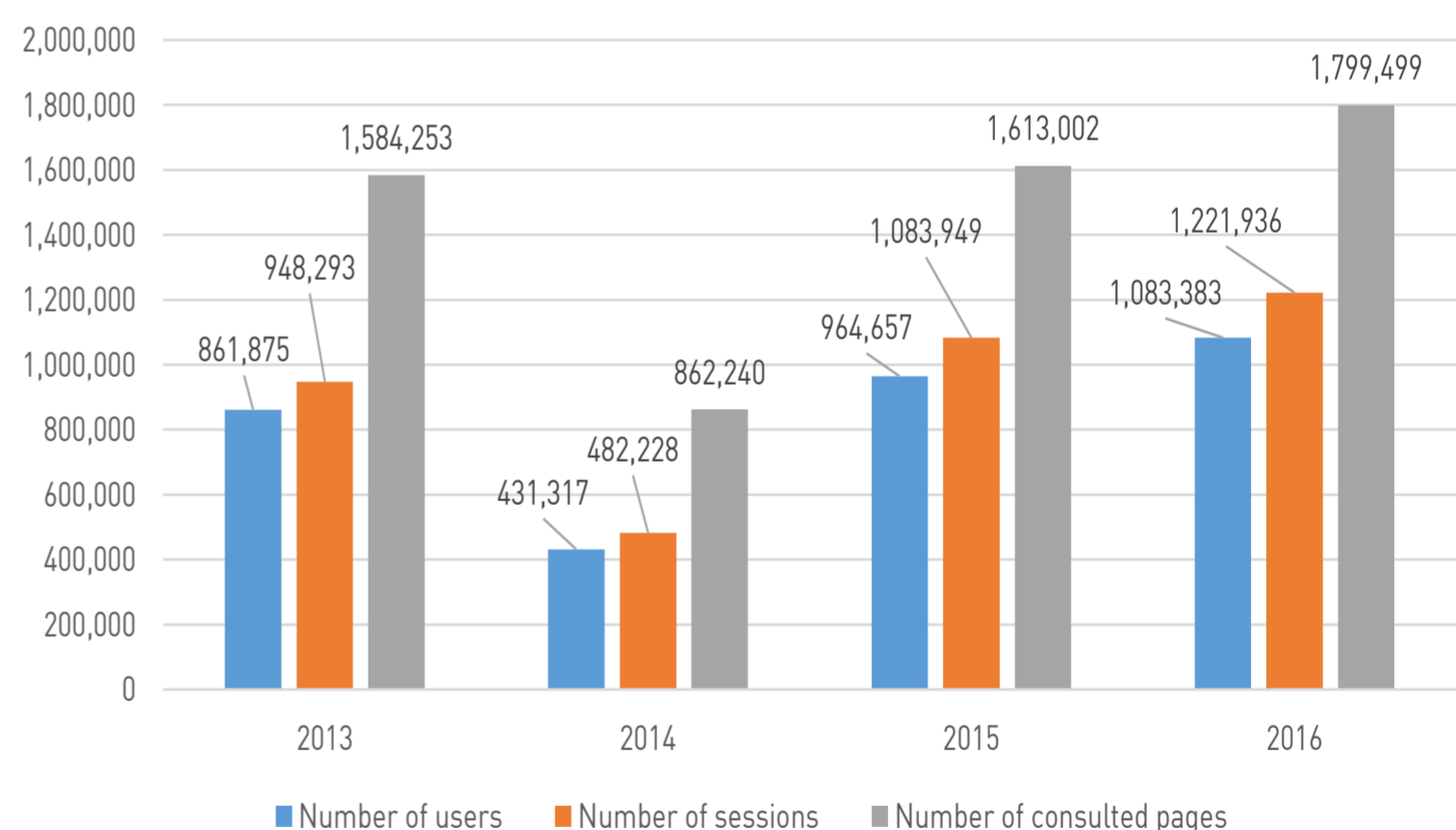
Evolution exposure calls versus information calls to the Belgian Poison Centre 2011-2016



The renewal of the website in 2014 initially led to a decrease in the number of users, sessions and pages visited in that year. However, a comparison between 2013 (the year before the website was renewed) and 2016 resulted in an increase in the number of users (861,875 to 1,083,383 (+ 25.7%)), sessions (948,293 to 1,221,936 (+ 28.9%)) and frequented pages (1,584,253 to 1,799,499 (+ 13.6%)).

The average consulted pages/session was 1.6 (1.5 - 1.8), the session duration 1 minute 5 seconds (57 seconds - 1 minute 24 seconds) and the proportion of returning visitors 12.6% (10.7% - 13.6%). In 2016, BPC reached 404 followers on Twitter and 601 on Facebook. From the survey we know that 9/404 (2.23%) callers first consulted the internet before calling the BPC.

www.poisoncentre.be



CONCLUSION

The number of people calling the BPC rises slightly with more calls for exposures and fewer requests for information. The stay on www.poisoncentre.be is short, with a small number of pages visited and a high number of new visitors. The number of Facebook- and Twitter-followers is low. These results suggest that people still use the BPC telephone in emergency situations and consult other communication tools when they are looking for information. Follow up is needed to determine whether this trend is continuing and to identify the influence of internet on the number and characteristics of calls to the Belgian Poison Centre.