23.9 TOXICOLOGY IN ICU

DESCRIPTION

See Chapter 19: Poisonings.

GENERAL MEASURES

» Poisoning should always be considered in patients who present with an altered level of consciousness.
» A thorough collateral history and toxicology screen may assist with making the diagnosis.
» Toxicology screens; where available, may have varied diagnostic reliability in patients with suspected poisoning. These results should always be interpreted in conjunction with a comprehensive clinical assessment.
» Consider whether positive results are due to iatrogenic administration of sedatives/analgesics commonly used to manage patients.
» Exert due caution in making the diagnosis of brain death or deciding on neurological futility if poisoning have not been excluded (See section 23.12: End of life care, determination of death).
» Although patients may fit a specific toxidrome or have a history of ingesting a specific toxin, consider whether patients may have ingested more than one toxin.

For guidance on specific toxins, see Chapter 19: Poisonings.