Illinois Health and Hospital Association

Dr. Chhabra and Dr. Weigel Build on Legacy of Clinical Excellence, Education and Poison Prevention.

CHICAGO – The Illinois Poison Center (IPC), operated by the Illinois Health and Hospital Association, today announced the appointment of two new medical directors, Dr. Neeraj Chhabra, MD, MSCR, FACMT and Dr. Bernard “Ben” Weigel, MD.

Dr. Chhabra and Dr. Weigel, both medical toxicologists, bring extensive clinical expertise, leadership, and a shared commitment to advancing poison prevention and education across Illinois.

Dr. Chhabra is a board-certified emergency physician and medical toxicologist who serves as the Director of Medical Toxicology and Assistant Professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Illinois Chicago and UI Health. He earned his Doctor of Medicine degree from Jefferson Medical College and completed residency training in Emergency Medicine at Cook County Hospital, followed by fellowship training in Medical Toxicology at the Toxikon Consortium in Chicago and in Clinical Ethics at the MacLean Center for Medical Ethics. He obtained a Master of Science in Clinical Research from Rush Graduate College. Dr. Chhabra has received research funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to address substance use disorders and improve healthcare delivery using machine learning.

“I am honored to work alongside Dr. Weigel and join the great team of certified poison specialists at the Illinois Poison Center,” said IPC Medical Director Dr. Chhabra. "The IPC has a long-standing reputation for clinical excellence and public service. I look forward to helping expand our efforts in patient care, education and research while ensuring healthcare providers and Illinois residents continue to have access to expert poison treatment guidance 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

Dr. Weigel is an Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and an attending physician at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. He completed residency training in Emergency Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, where he also served as Chief Resident, followed by fellowship training in Medical Toxicology through the Toxikon Consortium in Chicago. Dr. Weigel’s academic and research interests focus on emerging drugs of abuse, poison center surveillance, and pediatric cannabis exposures. He is an NIH/NIDA-supported investigator through the ANTIDOTE Institute and actively collaborates on research examining trends in toxic exposures and substance-related harms across the United States.

“Poison centers provide real-time expertise that helps patients receive the right care at the right time, whether that's safely managing an exposure at home or supporting physicians caring for critically ill patients,” said IPC Medical Director Dr. Weigel. “I'm honored to join the IPC team and look forward to advancing poison prevention, education and research while helping ensure every Illinois resident has access to expert toxicology guidance whenever it's needed.”

“We are excited to welcome Dr. Weigel and Dr. Chhabra to the IPC team,” said Carol DesLauriers, Vice President, Illinois Poison Center. “Their clinical expertise, collaborative approach, and research experience will further strengthen our ability to provide expert poison treatment guidance and education across Illinois.”

Dr. Weigel and Dr. Chhabra joined the Illinois Poison Center in July 2026, succeeding Dr. Michael Wahl following his retirement after nearly 30 years of distinguished service as IPC Medical Director. Throughout his tenure, Dr. Wahl has been a steadfast advocate for toxicology education, public health outreach, and clinical excellence. His leadership has shaped IPC’s statewide impact and elevated its national reputation.

“For more than 70 years, the Illinois Poison Center has been a trusted resource for families, healthcare providers and communities across Illinois,” said A.J. Wilhelmi, President and CEO, Illinois Health and Hospital Association. “As we celebrate Dr.

Wahl's extraordinary legacy, we are excited to welcome Drs. Chhabra and Weigel, whose expertise and leadership will help ensure the IPC continues to deliver world-class clinical guidance, education and innovation for years to come."

"Dr. Wahl has been an invaluable leader, mentor and trusted voice for IPC," DesLauriers added. "His dedication to our mission and the countless lives he has impacted through his clinical expertise and compassionate leadership have helped define who we are today. We are deeply grateful for his service and wish him the best in retirement."

In 2025, IPC handled 72,500 cases involving potentially harmful substances, ranging from minor to severe. Approximately one-third of IPC's poison calls come directly from healthcare professionals on behalf of their patients, seeking additional guidance about treatment plans related to harmful exposures such as overdoses, medication errors or adverse reactions, plants, household chemicals, automotive products, insect stings, lead, carbon monoxide and more. For more information about the Illinois Poison Center, visit illinoispoisoncenter.org.

About Illinois Poison Center

The Illinois Poison Center, operated by the Illinois Health and Hospital Association, is a nonprofit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline (1-800-222-1222) staffed by specially trained physicians, nurses and pharmacists. The Illinois Poison Center is dedicated to reducing harm due to poisoning. IPC's expert-led helpline provides immediate treatment recommendations to the public and healthcare providers. IPC is the oldest and one of the largest poison centers in the nation. IPC has provided timely poison prevention and treatment services since 1953.

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