



Henri J. Breault, MD

In 1957, Dr. Breault became Chief of Pediatrics and Director of a new Poison Control Centre at the Hotel Dieu Hospital, where he daily faced cases of children poisoned by medicines or other "hazardous products" found in the home, especially the aspirin bottles which could be easily opened. Thanks to his dedicated efforts, child-resistant containers for medicines would eventually become mandated by the government, saving many children from accidental poisoning.

Henri J. Breault received his MD from The University of Western Ontario in 1936. An internship at the Hotel Dieu Hospital in Windsor gave Dr. Breault a strong foundation in pediatrics, which he applied to a 41-year practice in Windsor, and particularly to a comprehensive campaign to prevent accidental childhood poisonings.

There were some 1,000 cases and at least 1 death each year in Windsor from accidental poisonings, but it seemed nothing was being done about the worsening situation. After an aggressive public education failed to lower the incidence, Dr. Breault focused instead on prevention and protection by facilitating the development of the first child-proof container. In 1962, he established the Ontario Association for the Control of Accidental Poisoning and then forged an alliance between local physicians and pharmacists to get the job done.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts, a design from the President of ITL Industries, Mr. Peter Hedgewick, known as the "Palm N Turn," was developed and adopted in the Windsor area in 1967. The incidence of child poisonings quickly dropped by 91 %. The Ontario College of Pharmacy endorsed the new cap and it was soon in use across the province.

The Ontario Government made child-resistant containers mandatory by 1974. Other provinces soon followed suit, as did the United States. Dr. Breault's child-proof container idea has saved countless children from death or serious injury from accidental poisonings. Indeed, as one enthusiastic health official put it: "The Child-Resistant Container is to childhood poisonings what the Salk vaccine is to polio". Dr. Breault died in 1983. In honor of his career, the Hotel Dieu Hospital in Windsor established the "Henri J. Breault Pediatrics Centre".