POPULATION BASED CHARACTERISTICS OF FATALITIES AND HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS FOR ACUTE POISONING IN FIJI

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Background Globally, the burden of acute poisoning is disproportionately borne by low- and middle-income countries. Culturally mediated factors have been suggested to account for the variations in the epidemiology of poisoning within countries.

Aim To investigate the incidence and demographic characteristics of poisoning fatalities and hospital admissions among indigenous Fijians and Indians in Viti Levu, Fiji.

Methods Individuals with a mechanism of injury classified as poisoning were identified using the Fiji Injury Surveillance in Hospitals system, a population-based trauma registry established for 12-months in Viti Levu. Relevant data were extracted and analysed.

Results The 17 fatalities and 169 primary hospital admissions accounted for mean annual rates of 2.3 and 26.0/100 000 respectively. Overall, more than two-thirds of the poisonings occurred among people of Indian ethnicity. The annual rate of hospital admissions among Indians was 3.1 times that of Fijians (41.2 cf 13.3/100 000). Unintentional poisoning admission rates were highest among Indian males aged 0–14 years (36.1/100 000). Most intentional poisoning admissions occurred among females (n=50, 59.5%) and in 15–29 year olds (n=65, 79.3%). The annual hospital admission rate in this age group was 9.8/100 000, with a seven-fold excess rate among Indians compared with Fijians. Over 75% of poisoning events occurred at home.

Significance This population-based study identifies important differences in the socio-demographic characteristics associated with poisoning in Fiji. These differences indicate the need for culturally relevant strategies that consider the specific contexts for suicide and self-harm

among the Indian population in Fiji, as well as broader implications for hazards at home for the population in Fiji more generally.