

News and notes

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Marla Ruzicka, founder of Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict (CIVIC), died in April in an Iraq car bomb blast. She had been in Iraq conducting injury epidemiology—door to door surveys—trying to determine more accurately the number of civilian casualties in the country. Ms Ruzicka founded CIVIC in 2003 and was instrumental in securing millions of dollars in aid money from the US federal government for distribution in Iraq. It was a paradoxical and ironic goal of hers to make wars safe, but until we find more effective ways to stop them from happening, the need for people with Marla's vision and energy is clear.

WHO MEETING ON CHILD INJURY PREVENTION

The World Health Organization hosted an historic consultation meeting on child injury prevention from 31 March to 1 April 2005. Staff from four WHO headquarter departments, as well as four regional advisors and four UNICEF staff, met with 28 other delegates from international and regional child injury prevention organizations, governments, non-governmental organizations, foundations, and donors. The goal of the meeting was to develop a draft WHO strategy for global child injury prevention and begin planning a world report on child injury prevention. The meeting discussed the current situation of child injury globally; potential areas for effort and collaboration; a WHO strategy for child injury prevention; and the rationale, concepts, and process for developing a world report on child injury prevention. In her opening speech Dr Catherine Le Galès-Camus, Assistant Director General of Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health, WHO, said that it was an important meeting and the first of its kind to "bring together, at a global level, agencies with an interest in child injury prevention to discuss what is being done and to consider some positive directions on what might be done in preventing these injuries and deaths". She went on to stress that although the burden of deaths, injuries, and disabilities in children around the world was enormous, they are definitely preventable. Much success has been documented in high income countries. The challenge is to adapt these interventions in poor regions and countries in order to reduce the enormous, unequal burden in these areas. The two-day meeting concluded

by agreeing on four major outcomes: to develop a WHO strategy for child injury prevention; to develop a short "white paper" on child injury prevention for policy makers; to prepare an article on the need to address child injuries for a prestigious medical journal; and to begin preparations for the development of a world report on child injury prevention. A second meeting of this collaborative effort is planned for the end of 2005. More information and the proceedings of the meeting can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/8yho6>.

REVIEW OF US TRAFFIC SAFETY DATA

In the US, each state gathers road traffic crash data from local police agencies and supplies it to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). In an effort to improve this data, NHTSA administers a grant program. Congress is considering whether to reauthorize and expand the program, and requested an audit examining (1) the quality of state crash information, (2) the activities states undertook to improve their traffic records systems and any progress made, and (3) NHTSA's oversight of the grant program. The auditor reviewed systems in nine states and found, for example, that some states entered crash information into their systems in a matter of weeks, while others took a year or more. The auditor's report, available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d0524.pdf>, suggests that the US Congress consider requiring that states have their traffic safety data systems assessed at least every five years. In addition, the report recommends that the NHTSA improve documentation and oversight of its state traffic safety data grant program.

WHO-UN ROAD SAFETY WORK

The May issue of *The road ahead*, WHO's newsletter reporting progress on global road safety initiatives, is available at <http://tinyurl.com/8s9ml> in various languages. The newsletter presents progress on implementing the UN General Assembly Resolution, reflecting the work of many partner organizations involved in the UN road safety collaboration. More specifically, this issue reports on progress made at the 2nd United Nations Road Safety Collaboration Meeting, held in March 2005; events held for World Day of Remembrance; road safety work in two of the UN regional commissions; and

recent initiatives in road safety taking place in Cambodia, Ethiopia, and Oman.

CYCLE INJURIES IN QUEENSLAND

The April issue of *Injury Bulletin* from Queensland's Injury Surveillance Unit (QISU) focused on cycle injuries (Visit <http://tinyurl.com/7o5f5> for recent bulletins). In the bulletin, the authors report that cycling related injury is a common reason for emergency department presentation in Queensland, comprising 3% of all injury presentations and 6% of all injury presentations under the age of 15 years. Bicycles are the most common consumer product causing presentation to a Queensland emergency department for injury in children, being associated with 7% of all injuries in children aged 5-9 years and 9% of all injuries in children aged 10-14 years. QISU data show that in Queensland the majority of adults are injured on the road (55%). In children under the age of 15 years, 36% were injured on the road and 32% at home (in Queensland it is legal for cyclists to ride on the footpath). In QISU data 10% of child injuries and 6% of adult injuries occurred on the footpath. Most injuries do not involve a collision with a motor vehicle and are "single vehicle" crashes. An examination of admitted patients suffering a bicycle related injury at Brisbane's Mater Children's Hospital, a tertiary referral centre, shows that in the two years preceding the introduction of compulsory helmets in Queensland head injuries made up 34% of admitted patients with bicycle injury, while in the 10 years following this introduction, the percentage fell to 17%. Over this period there was no change in practice for admitting head injured patients.

MANDATORY SAFETY STANDARD FOR BABY BATH AIDS

A mandatory safety standard for baby bath aids has been introduced in Australia, intended to raise safety awareness among carers of babies. The new standard requires manufacturers to display a warning label on all bath aid products. The label, which must be visible when the child is in the product, is intended to alert users that children have drowned using bath aids and that the carer should always remain within arms reach. The label also warns that bath aids are not a safety device or a substitute for adult supervision. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission will enforce the mandatory product safety standard.

UK STUDY OF BATH SEATS

A paper by Sibert *et al* reports on drownings associated with bath seats in the UK. Using a press cuttings database and a comprehensive literature search, the authors found six cases between 1989 and 2003. This compared with 47 children of similar age (under two years) drowning in the bath not associated with a bath seat. The authors concluded that a baby drowning after being placed in a bath seats is a rare but definite cause of death. Bath seats appear to give a false sense of security (even if not encouraged by the manufacturers). It is unclear whether putting a baby in a bath seat represents an increased risk of drowning compared with a baby without a seat. Without knowing the number of mothers that use bath seats it is difficult to come to firm conclusions on the risks to babies. New research is needed to clarify this issue. Whether in a seat or not it is clear that the main risk to babies in the bath

is being left unsupervised. The paper, Drowning of babies in bath seats: do they provide false reassurance? by Professor Jo Sibert *et al*, is published in *Child: Care, Health and Development* (May 2005;31(3):255–259). The paper can be accessed via <http://tinyurl.com/bqd8u>.

ECOSA BECOMES EUROSAFE

ECOSA, the European Consumer Safety Association, has broadened its mission and will continue its work under the name of EuroSafe, the European Association for Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion. Approved at the recent annual general meeting in Edinburgh, this development represents a milestone in making the expanded Europe of today a safer place to live.

1.5 MILLION CHILDREN'S CHAIRS RECALLED

In April, the US Consumer Product Safety Commission and Atico

International USA Inc announced a voluntary recall of children's folding chairs. An estimated 1.5 million chairs are affected. The problem is that the chair's safety lock can fail, allowing the chair to collapse or fold unexpectedly. Children's fingers can become caught or entrapped in the hinge and slot areas of the chair, posing a pinch or cut hazard. This can cause severe lacerations and finger tip amputations to children's fingers. The firm has received four reports of finger tip amputations and seven reports of lacerations to children's fingers.

Contributors to these News and notes include Ian Scott, Adnan Hyder, Anna Cronin de Chavez, Peter Jacobsen, and Barry Pless. Michael Hayes has edited the contributions. Items for future issues, including calendar entries, should be sent to Michael Hayes at the Child Accident Prevention Trust, 22–26 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AJ, UK, fax +44 (0)20 7608 3674, email mike.hayes@capt.org.uk as soon as possible.

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