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A GAP BETWEEN TWO PERCEPTIONS: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PARENTAL SUPERVISION IN CHILDHOOD INJURY PREVENTION AND SUPERVISION SELF-EFFICACY

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10.1136/ip.2010.029215.665

Supervision is believed to be a major means of childhood injury prevention. However, as the World Report on Child Injury Prevention states, more research is needed to assess the effectiveness of supervision. To understand adult perceptions toward the issue, we asked 3918 adults in Japan about the effectiveness of parental supervision and also their self-efficacy to supervise children. Respondents first read three short stories of childhood injury situations, and made judgments whether the injuries could be prevented if parents adequately supervised. Then, respondents reported how confident they were to supervise (watch) a child under the circumstances described in the stories. Injury stories were: a 3-year-old broke a little finger bone by falling down in a small playground (a situation without clear injury agents and causes); a 3-year-old broke a little finger bone by catching the finger in the door when he/she was following parents (perceived injury causes can be parents or the door); and, a 1-year-old got a thermal injury by touching the heat outlet of a rice cooker (perceived causes can be a cooker or parents). Results showed that respondents had very low self-efficacy to provide adequate supervision to prevent childhood injuries, while they strongly believed that the injuries could be prevented by parental supervision. They thought that parents could prevent children getting injured by watching them, but they themselves would not be able to provide enough supervision. The sheer gap between the perceptions has important implications for childhood safety promotion targeting adult population.