

FALL INJURIES—A PREVENTABLE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE: RESULTS FROM A PILOT SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMME IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

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Background Unintentional injuries due to fall are a leading cause of emergency department visits in children under 14 years.

Aim The aim of this study is to report the existing baseline facts on fall related injuries.

Methods This was a secondary analysis of a childhood unintentional injury surveillance database setup in the emergency department of the Aga Khan Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan for 3 months. The data was collected by interviewing caretakers of children under 12 years of age presenting with an unintentional injury to the emergency departments of the four major tertiary care hospitals of Karachi, Pakistan.

Results There were 281 cases of falls injuries. Of these 186 (66.2%) occurred in males giving a male female ratio of 1.95. Majority of fall were seen in the 5–11 years age group (n=170, 60.5%). Most of these injuries took place at home (n=238, 84.7%). Main reasons for these injuries were fall from height (n=147, 52.3%), from stairs/steps (n=70, 24.9%), playground equipment (n=28, 10%), from bed (n=25, 8.9) and attendants' arms (n=9, 3.2%). The fall injuries were mostly minor (n=177, 63%) in severity. Around 84% (n=236) cases were directly discharged from the ED and 20 (7.1%) were admitted to the ward. There were two expires (case fatality 0.7). Short-term disability was found 104 cases (37%) and long-term in 47 (16.7%) cases.

Conclusion Fall is common unintentional injuries occurring mostly at home. Strategies at home like installing stair gate or other barriers to heights can reduce the burden of fall related injuries.