

Water safety

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AN ANALYSIS OF ACCIDENTAL DROWNING FATALITIES IN MANIPAL, SOUTH INDIA

doi:10.1136/injuryprev-2012-040590h.1

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Background Accidental drowning constitutes a significant public health problem that is often neglected in developing countries.

Aims/Objectives/Purpose This study aims at describing the epidemiology and pattern of accidental drowning deaths in Manipal, a coastal city in South India.

Methods This registry based descriptive research spanned over a period of 10 years (1998–2007). All autopsy case records were retrospectively reviewed and accidental drowning deaths were included in the study.

Results/Outcomes During the study period 40 cases of drowning deaths were reported. Males accounted for 82.5% of cases. Majority of the victims were in 2nd and 3rd decades, together accounting for 55% of drowning deaths followed by children in the first decade (15%). Fresh water drowning was reported in 70% cases. River was the most common site of drowning (35%) followed by sea (27.5%). Wells, canals, lakes, pond, and water tank were the other sites of drowning. 87.5% victims of drowning were brought dead to hospital. 45% deaths were reported in the post monsoon period. 30% of the total drowning deaths occurred during the year 2006 and 2007.

Significance/Contribution to the Field Morbidity and mortality due to drowning can be prevented by understanding its epidemiology, common patterns and educating people about prevention especially when hindsight often shows that many deaths from drowning are preventable. Drowning is a lethal cause of death and hence, main emphasis must be on prevention. An understanding of the burden of unintentional drowning in the coastal region can help to develop preventive strategies so that precious human lives are saved.