

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ROAD TRAFFIC INJURIES ON HOUSEHOLDS IN KANDY, SRI LANKA

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Background In Sri Lanka, road traffic injuries (RTIs) kill one person every 4 h. RTI can cause serious economic difficulties for families. Although public sector healthcare is free in Sri Lanka, the household costs of RTI are not known.

Objective To assess the costs of treatment, lost work, vehicle and other damages, transport and lodging, compensation paid, intangibles etc to households that have sustained RTI.

Methods A community based cross-sectional survey was conducted in 2008 using stratified multistage cluster sampling. Data were collected using pretested structured interviewer-administered questionnaires. Individuals who had sustained an injury/death due to a road traffic crash (RTC) in the preceding 12 months were included. A direct accounting approach was used.

Results Of 11724 persons screened (n=3080 households), 149 had sustained RTI, of these 16 were deaths. The mean age of those injured was 28.8 years (SD=16.8). 56.6% were employed at the time of the crash. The mean household costs attributed to these injuries were Rs. 34 244 (Rs.100- Rs. 700 000), given the average family income (≤Rs.10.000). In all income groups, there were wide ranges of costs following RTI. Loss of income due to lost working days was significantly higher (p<0.001) for those who worked per hour (29) compared to those who were salaried (4). Only 14.1% had any form of health insurance.

Significance The economic impact of RTI on the injured/dead victims and their families is substantial. Implementing appropriate preventive measures could reduce these economic effects, in addition to the immeasurable costs of pain, grief, and suffering.

* 1US\$=Rs. 114.00

1 NZD \$=Rs. 100.00