

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Accident prevention in Catalonia

EDITOR,—There are two reasons to write this letter. First, I would like to congratulate you for publishing *Injury Prevention*. In my opinion the articles are appropriate and of high quality. It is to be hoped that very soon the journal will become the meeting point for all professionals in the injury prevention field.

Secondly, I would like to take advantage of this space to disseminate information about the existence of two institutions devoted to accident prevention in Catalonia. Frequently small territories find it difficult to make the presence of such places known. The same is true for the work these institutions carry out, and this is even more problematic if there are few people skilled in the English language.

In Catalonia, an autonomous community in the north east of Spain, the Advisory Council on Childhood Accidents (Consell Assessor sobre els Accidents Infantils) has been in existence since 1985. It promotes and coordinates activities in research and prevention to decrease this important health problem. The council has produced several publications, leaflets, and audiovisual material for health education, and sponsors epidemiological research. There is also the Catalan Institute of Traffic Safety (Institut Català de Seguretat Viària), created in 1991, whose main aim is a reduction in the prevalence and severity of traffic injuries, specifically in children and teenagers.

Once again my congratulations to you and to *Injury Prevention*; I hope it will soon become the main reference publication in this discipline.

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## BOOK REVIEW

**The Fight for Public Health. Principles and Practice of Media Advocacy.** S Chapman, D Lupton. (Pp 270; £19.95 paperback.) BMJ Publishing Group, 1994. ISBN 0-7279-0849-9.

At some time or another each of us will have reacted in frustration to the way the media had (mis)handled a health issue dear to our heart. Either the story will have been incomplete, or in our view, conveyed a bias that we did not believe was warranted on the facts. At other times we will have felt like strangling a colleague who, given their moment of fame, used words that were beyond the comprehension of the 'person on the street'; alternatively this colleague will have failed to grasp the difference between a sound-bite on television and a 45 minute lecture to a critical peer group

and will so cover their back that they end up saying little that has real meaning.

To many, 'the media' represents an alien world. Its inhabitants dress funny, talk funny, often look as though they should still be at school, and fail to appreciate the fact that anybody else could possibly have anything more important to do than help them meet their deadline. And their deadline is measured in minutes and seconds from NOW. What is 'known' or imagined of this alien world suggests it should be feared. It exists to try and trap you into looking foolish at best.

If none of the above apply to you — then how about the times when you have observed with incredulity as a story about a cat in a tree receives a great deal of coverage when you have tried and failed to attract any attention to any important health issue.

For all of you, help is at hand. It comes in the form of a 270 page book written by two Australians. It is in two sections. The first covers the theory and principles of public health advocacy. The second offers an A-Z for successful advocacy. The authors provide acute insights into the real world, for example 'governments . . . begin from the position of being more comfortable with doing little or nothing about public health issues' (p9). Readers will find information that will help them better understand how the media works and how to work the media.

It is rare to be able to review a textbook and describe it as one would a novel — but the content is fascinating and the theoretical points are illustrated with topical practical examples. The end result is an extremely readable book that is hard to put down. For example, anyone who has ventured into the issue of domestic swimming pool fencing will resonate with the account of the debate in Australia. (As a media tip don't speak of fencing of *private* swimming pools — the very word private will raise hackles and play into the hands of the individual freedom brigade.)

If you would like to take on some issue in the field of childhood unintentional injury, read this book. You will be better prepared as a consequence. You may even do what most of us only dream of — succeed.

If you have difficulty obtaining a copy it is because the tobacco lobby that bought up the entire stock to ensure the book does not become a risk to them or to similar groups — they have long experience of dealing in danger and so recognise a threat to themselves when one appears.

DAVID GEDDIS  
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## CALENDAR AND NOTICES

### Forthcoming events

*Injury Epidemiology and Prevention: A Short Course*

The WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Safety Technology, Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi, India, together with the Monash University Accident Research Centre in Melbourne, Australia, will conduct an intensive five day course in injury epidemiology and preven-

tion. The aim is to improve the injury prevention knowledge, research, and implementation skills of practicing professionals and graduate students working in injury related areas in both industrialized and non-industrialized countries. For further information contact: Sara Jowett, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Wellington Road, Clayton, Victoria 3168, Australia.

*SafeComm 5 — The Fifth International Conference on Safe Communities: Mainstreaming Community Safety*

This conference is being jointly sponsored by the Hume City Council and La Trobe Council, with WHO endorsement. It will be held at the Sunbury Campus of Victoria University of Technology and Monash University's Gippsland Campus at Churchill in the Latrobe Valley, Australia on 22-26 February 1996. The focus will be on developing community safety at local, national and international levels; making individual community safety programs viable and sustainable; making safety part of the policy and normal routine procedures of local government and community agencies; and data collection and program evaluation. For further information contact: SafeComm 5 Conference Secretariat, Convention Network, 224 Rouse Street, Port Melbourne, Victoria 3207, Australia.

### Occupational Injury Symposium

A symposium on occupational injury, sponsored by the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety, will be held in Sydney, Australia, 24-27 February 1996. Although we do not often think of children in connection with occupational injuries, there is increasing evidence that the problem exists. For further information contact: Occupational Injury Secretariat, Professional Education Program, NOHSC, GPO Box 58, Sydney 2001, Australia.

### Saskatchewan Injury Prevention Network

A conference is scheduled for May 1996 to 'motivate, educate and activate' delegates from a wide cross section of disciplines. In preparation for the conference a research assistant has been hired to compile a profile on the health of children in the province, including all pertinent injury statistics. It will be interesting to see how this exercise turns out because in this province, as elsewhere, it is difficult to assemble child injury statistics other than those describing fatalities.

### National Workshop on Emergency Department Data

This conference, to take place 23-25 January 1996, in Atlanta, Georgia is part of an ongoing effort to implement a uniform emergency department data set and improve the quality of existing data.

### Previous events

*Child Transportation Safety Conference*  
With the assistance of the National SAFE KIDS Campaign, a conference was held in Arlington, Virginia from 31 May-2 June, sponsored by the Department of Transport. This conference brought together more than 400 professionals from health care, education, law enforcement, public health, safety, and injury prevention to create new alliances in all areas of transportation.

### Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine (AAAM)

The AAAM held its 39th annual conference